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Editorial: A Quest for Jesus Christ

KARA J. LYONS-PARDUE

The first Quest for the Historical Jesus was effectively named and shut in one fell swoop by Albert Schweitzer's 1906 monograph.[1] On October 20, 1953, Ernst Käsemann gave a lecture to a reunion of Marburg students that reopened the scholarly search for the Jesus of history.[2] As a follow up to his lecture and in light of the burgeoning "Second Quest," Käsemann outlined two *Sackgassen*, or "blind alleys," whither the new journey should not go.[3] These hazardous dead ends were, generally, historical positivism and docetism,[4] paradigmatic missteps Käsemann attributed to Joachim Jeremias and his own Doktorvater, Rudolf Bultmann, respectively.

More than two centuries after the initial Lives of Jesus, the Quests' results still remain deeply in question and have arguably profited practitioners of faith in Christ little. Nonetheless, this journal ventures to ask "Who is Jesus Christ?" The admixture of approaches contained herein is a far cry from the historical and methodological specificity at which the practitioners of the various Quests for the Historical Jesus have aimed. This journal is by definition interdisciplinary, and the seminary from which it issues does not shy from questions of Christian practice and

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1 The English title for Schweitzer's book (originally titled in German Von Reimarus zu Wrede; that is, simply, "From Reimarus to Wrede") gave the scholarly phenomenon its moniker. See Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. W. Montgomery et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

2 First published in ZTK 51 (1954): 125-53, the article is available in English as "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in Essays on New Testament Themes, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964), 15-47.

3 Ernst Käsemann, "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," in New Testament Questions of Today, trans. W. J. Montaguem (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 23-65.

4 More specifically, Käsemann accuses Jeremias of equating the kerygma with the historical Jesus' message as found in the Synoptic Gospels, making the object of historical inquiry the content of faith ("Blind Alleys," 25-6). He spends even more time critiquing Bultmann. His first objection (to which he returns repeatedly) is Bultmann's insistence on absolute historical discontinuity between the kerygmatic Christ and the historical Jesus ("Blind Alleys," 36-41). There must be more historically available than "that" (dass) Jesus came, Käsemann insists, lest Christian preaching become docetic ("Blind Alleys," 64).

ecclesial benefit. Still, the question remains an important one: does a panoply of methods and entry-points better serve the quest for Jesus' identity?

Perhaps we should concede that our questions are different ones. The Quests' questions have been, by definition, historically oriented. But as the Table of Contents illustrates, these authors, all presenters at our March 2008 Forum, have not been bound by such strictures. As can be seen in the phrasing of the question—"Who is Jesus Christ?"—which stands in the present tense while not excluding history's relevance, the Jesus we seek exists both connected to and beyond his earthly life.

Ancient documents about Jesus, in fact, beg a more complex question than the Quests have allowed. For instance, as Princeton Theological Seminary's **Amy Peeler** inquires, "Who was Jesus Christ to the author and recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews?", the question is simultaneously literary and historical. Rather than mining for historically verifiable data or *ipsissima verba*—categories that left a deeply christological epistle, Hebrews, out of the Jesus Historian's "canon"—Peeler highlights a no less human aspect of Jesus Christ: his emotions. In her careful exegetical fashion, she demonstrates the ways in which the ancient rhetorical tool of *ethos* functions in the letter to expose the character of Christ. Profoundly theological, yet outstretching traditional categories of impassability and immutability, Jesus' emotions are, for Peeler, evidence of his humanity and divinity.

Steven Battin of Notre Dame analyzes the intersection of Jesus' crucifixion, tragedy, and salvation in the theologies of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jon Sobrino. This approach fits under the traditional division of theological labors the founders of modern biblical studies might have called "Dogmatic Theology." Such a title would have supposed a removal from tangible, historical reality (so-called New Testament Theology's playground). Instead, the historical "evitability" of Jesus' death constitutes its tragedy for Balthasar and Sobrino, as Battin presents the case. For both Roman Catholic thinkers, the theological (or as Balthasar puts it, "vertical") element of Jesus' tragic death only gains its full salvific significance in conjunction with its historical, or "horizontal," aspect. Sobrino's atonement theory, in fact, rejects traditional theories in favor of an "immanent focus upon directly empirical, historically bound, causal processes"

(Hieb, 54), as Princeton Theological Seminary's **Nathan Hieb** further illuminates in his essay.

For those unacquainted with Asian christological thought, **Sung-Sup Kim** of Princeton Theological Seminary provides an approachable introduction, without over-simplifying the complexities of the Asian context(s) or theology. He focuses on three theologians, one Korean and two Japanese, who each studied under the very German scholars active in the debate over the identity of Jesus—Bultmann, Bornkamm, Barth, and Käsemann. Each of these Asian theologians, however, resists granting Jesus' historical existence primacy for Asian faith, although for very different reasons. Kim himself critiques their eventual abandonment of Jesus Christ's unique personhood. Although he sees various contextual factors of these Asian theologians—seeking God among the *minjung* or in light of Buddhism—trumping key christological tenets, Kim remains hopeful for a "faithfully orthodox and yet thoroughly contextual Christology in Asia" (Kim, 80).

It is precisely Jesus' personhood to which Boston University's **Krista Millay** turns our christological focus, rather than the cross and sacrificial imagery, which, she argues, overshadow traditional portrayals of Christ. Her feminist hermeneutic seeks to hollow out spaces in the text to allow for potential interpretations from multiple contexts and worldviews. Turning to Paul, one such "culprit" of an over-emphasis on sacrificial atonement, Millay "creatively imagines" the Corinthians' end of the epistolary conversation as they might have sought to make sense of the Son of God's death on a cross.

Matthew Novenson's and **Alice Yafeh-Deigh**'s responses to Peeler and Millay, respectively, are both incisive and gracious. At the Forum itself, Novenson and Yafeh-Deigh, both of Princeton Theological Seminary, generated dialogue with the authors and steered audience questions down avenues helpful to the discussion. Their contributions add significantly to the conversation and should be read alongside the articles to which they respond.

Among the proliferating subject matter of present-day religious studies, a journal volume focused on the theme of *Jesus Christ* seems remarkably simplistic. Despite the topical coherence, however, the reader will note

persistent ideological and theological disagreements between the authors. For one, Jesus' death on the cross is a relic of sacrificial preoccupation that reinscribes victimization, no longer meaningful for theology in the way Jesus' person, or life, is. For another, it is in reference to the tragedy of Jesus' cross that generations of human victims actualize their own salvation from their oppressors. While one author situates her argument in the grammar and rhetoric of the biblical text, another navigates instead the contours of modern-day cultures. Yet, for all the diverse attempts to capture this figure whose title Christians worldwide bear, none has provided closure to the question: Who is Jesus Christ?

Instead of highlighting the potential *Sackgassen* among these proposals, aiming to restrict risky avenues of investigation, this fruitful "quest" for Jesus Christ invites more inquiry. Our multiple source texts, interpretive traditions, and modern contexts resist singular or final answers about Jesus' identity and significance. A posture of humility and fellowship—that is, κοινωνία—along the quest may better serve our Subject Matter.

The publication of *Koinonia* is the result of many people's efforts: the authors, respondents, book reviewers, entire editorial board, and, particularly, the Production Editor, Shannon Smythe. Without each of these individuals, my work would be impossible. I would like to thank the members of Princeton Theological Seminary's administration, and especially Professor Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, for their support of their doctoral students and our journal.

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With Tears and Joy: The Emotions of Christ in Hebrews

AMY L. B. PEELER

The Epistle to the Hebrews is often thought of as an island in the sea of New Testament studies. Having neither an explicit author nor provenance, its style, its method of citation, its rhetorical finesse, and its Christology make it an awkward fit with any other group of New Testament literature. It is the latter two qualities—its consistent use of sophisticated rhetorical techniques and its unparalleled Christology—that make Hebrews a perfect candidate for a fresh investigation of its portrayal of Jesus Christ.

In this paper I will explore the unique Christology of Hebrews by engaging in a rhetorical analysis of Christ's emotions as a key element in the overall portrayal of Christ's *ethos*. This analysis will be applied to selected texts that attribute emotion to Christ, which I have organized into three groups: his experience of suffering, his disposition of mercy, and his attitude of joy. Two central questions guide the exegesis of these texts: first, how does the highlighted emotive state of Christ help the author to persuade his readers; and, second, how does this slice of the *ethos* of Christ contribute to the complex Christology of Hebrews? I will argue that the author employs the rhetorical technique of *ethos* to convince his readers of the eternally empathetic nature of Christ's relationship with humanity and their need to hold fast to this relationship.

I. THE ETHOS OF CHRIST IN HEBREWS

Suffering

The second chapter of Hebrews flows out of the comparison between Christ and the angels begun in the first chapter (1:4). If Christ is superior to the angels, the author must attend to the fact that Christ was, for a time, made

lower than the angels.[1] He does this through a citation and explanation of Psalm 8.[2] The author asserts that while everything has been subjected to Christ, his reign is not yet apparent (2:8). The author goes on to describe Jesus by restating every word from his citation of Psalm 8:6, changing the aorist active verbs into perfect passive participles. Hence, he and his readers see Jesus, who has been made lower than the angels for a time and who has been crowned with glory and honor.[3] In the midst of these seemingly antithetical descriptions, the author inserts a prepositional phrase not found in the Psalm, διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου, because of the suffering of death. Its placement in the verse suggests that it provides an explanation for both participial phrases. Jesus is made lower than the angels because of his suffering through death, and he is crowned with glory and honor by passing through the suffering of that same death. For the author, Psalm 8 captures both the lowliness of humanity and the exaltation of that man above all things. In order to mold this citation into his argument, the author must supply the identity of this ἄνθρωπος and the means by which the subjugation and exaltation were accomplished.

This verse is important for our study of the *ethos* of Jesus because the use of this term for suffering allows the author to express his thought more fully than is strictly necessary. The basic story could have been told by claiming simply that it was through death that Jesus was made lower and was crowned. Our author, however, includes the more descriptive emotive element that it was through the *suffering* of death.

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1 Commentators disagree about the interpretation of βραχύ τι. Some interpret it temporally, "for a little while" (Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 69; William Lane, *Hebrews,* 2 vols. [WBC 47 a-b; Dallas: Word Books, 1991], 1:42) and others spatially, "a little lower than the angels" (Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* [NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox , 2006], 85, 90). I do not think these must be mutually exclusive. Jesus was made lower than the angels because he became an ἄνθρωπος, but this was only for a time. The temporal element is made especially clear by the νῦν and οὔπω in the author's explanation in v. 8.

2 Scholars debate whether the psalm in Hebrews is interpreted anthropologically, as in its original sense, or is read Christologically. Many agree that the author is playing on both senses (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 75; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 90; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* [AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 221).

3 Although one must not press verb tense to make a theological point, it is at least interesting that both Jesus' humiliation and exultation are conveyed in the perfect tense. A more thorough investigation of the Christology of the letter could attend to the question, "Are there ways in which the effects of Jesus' lowering remain in the midst of his exultation?"

In his own words, the author adds the event through which Jesus was subjugated and exalted, death, and the emotive experience of that event, suffering.

At the end of v. 9, the author adds one more phrase to his exegesis of Psalm 8, which explains the reason behind and the reason for Jesus' death. Jesus dies by the grace of God[4] and for all. What is important for our investigation is the experiential way in which the death is described. The author notes that Jesus tastes[5] the death. Like the use of πάθημα, one could imagine another author making the same point without using γεύομαι, the word for taste. It could have been said more succinctly that Jesus died by the grace of God for all, but again our author adds a very experiential, even emotive, mode of description.[6]

As the author moves to explicate the fraternal relationship between Jesus and the children of God, it is the theme of suffering that provides the connecting link. Verse 10 endeavors to explain more fully why Jesus tasted death for all. The author finds it fitting (ἔπρεπεν) that when God leads many children to glory, God does so by perfecting the author of their salvation through suffering. The author has not left the discussion of death, but it also seems possible that by employing the images of suffering he can make reference to other elements of Christ's experience. The following section will speak about Christ sharing in flesh and blood and becoming like his siblings in all ways (2:14, 17). Hence, in this instance, πάθημα might include not just the suffering involved with death but also the more general reference to the full human experiences of Jesus.

It is very clear that the author has more than the suffering of death in mind in his final reference to the suffering of Christ in this section (2:18).

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4 Herein lies a controversial textual variant in Hebrews. Several miniscules (0243, 1739), a manuscript of the Vulgate, and several Patristic commentators (Origen, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, and Fulgentius) render it as χωρίς θεοῦ, separate from God. This variant was much discussed among the church fathers (*Hebrews* [ACCS 10; ed. Erik M. Heen and Philip D.W. Krey; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005], 38-40). Bruce Metzger suggests that this variant was originally a marginal gloss meant to explain that everything, except God, would be subjected to Christ, drawn from 1 Cor 15:27 (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994], 594). The widespread witnesses and the context of this passage suggest that χάριτι θεοῦ is the best reading (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 76-77).

5 "γευόμαι," BDAG, 195.

6 The author uses this verb again in ch. 6 to describe someone who has experienced the heavenly gift (6:4).

In the conclusion of his treatment on the similarities between Christ and humanity, the author asserts that Christ is able to aid those who experience temptation because Jesus, too, has been tempted. Again, however, in order to enrich his point, the author does not just mention the temptation of Christ, but his suffering in being tempted. This certainly includes the temptation to avoid death, but as the future reference to the temptation of Christ will show, the author thinks that Christ was tempted in all things (4:15). Moreover, since the readers are tempted in many ways, not yet including death (12:4), it seems the gamut of Christ's temptation would correspond to the gamut of temptation of those to whom he is giving aid. Hence the suffering involved with temptation could allude to the emotive experience of Christ throughout his human life up to and including his death.

In these two discussions, the exegesis of Psalm 8 and the comparison between Christ and humanity, the author notes the suffering of Christ four times. In three of those occurrences, the basic point could have been conveyed without the use of the emotive term. He could have simply noted the death or temptation of Christ. Instead, he fills out these descriptions with experiential language. As the author constructs his exegesis of this psalm, he shows that in fulfilling the plan of God, both by becoming like humans in all ways and by being crowned with glory and honor, the suffering of Christ plays an important role.

Following a predominantly paraenetic section, the author returns to focus intentionally upon Christ in ch. 5 and here introduces the unique reflection that Christ is a priest in the order of Melchizedek.[7] His first descriptions of Jesus' priesthood after this interesting revelation highlight some of the most intense emotional characteristics of Jesus. The author wants to convey that, "in the days of his flesh, he cried out to the one who was able to save him from death." The intensity of Jesus' request is conveyed through the pleonastic inclusion of both prayers (δέησις) and supplications (ἱκετηρία). The author further intensifies this description by describing what accompanied the prayers and supplications of Christ—

7 The author of Hebrews is the only NT author to incorporate this element from Psalm 110, a hymn widely regarded as Christological. See Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; I Cor 15:25.

strong cries and tears (μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων).[8] Whether this poignant phrase, μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων, is adopted from echoes of the Gethsemane or passion narratives, or texts on pious Jewish prayer, it is clear that it portrays Jesus as one in a heightened emotional state who effusively expresses his request to God.

Suffering is an important aspect of the following verse as well (5:8). As the foundational verb in this paragraph, the author states that Jesus learned: he learned obedience through what he suffered, even though he was a son. Here the author seems to be employing the common Greek proverb μαθεῖν παθεῖν, which asserted that education necessitated physical, emotional, and spiritual struggle.[9] Christ's position as the Son of God did not prohibit him from encountering God's *paideia* or the emotional experience of suffering.[10] The next verses state that suffering and the concomitant learning of obedience allowed him to be perfect (an echo of 2:10), to become the savior for those who would obey him, and to be named by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. These poetic descriptions of Jesus' suffering in ch. 5, then, are not a tangential escapade into a dramatic story from the life of Jesus, but the vivid medium through which he fulfilled God's call on his life.

The final references to the suffering of Jesus also relate to his death. After the encomium to faith and in the midst of an athletic metaphor, the author states that Jesus endured the cross (12:2). As the only mention of the cross in the entire work, this reference would have carried notions of suffering, both physical and emotional for the readers. Moreover, the author invites his readers to consider Jesus as one who "endured such hostility from sinners against him" (12:3). This is another example of suffering, particularly the suffering of hostility and public shame.[11] Finally, in the last chapter, the author includes one more succinct but powerful assertion, "in order that Jesus might make people holy through his blood, he suffered

8 In his discussion of Esau, the author includes the note about his tears to indicate the seriousness with which he sought a place for repentance (12:17).

9 Johnson, *Hebrews*, 150.

10 Johnson states, "It would be difficult to think how Jesus 'learned' from the brutal moments before his death. . . . It may well be, then, that the author of Hebrews is thinking of a learning that took place over the course of Jesus' human existence . . ." (*Hebrews*, 149).

11 David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 438.

outside the gate" (13:12). A possible allusion to the Day of Atonement ritual, this, too, functions to highlight the shame and emotional anguish associated with the type of death Jesus underwent.[12]

How do these references to the suffering of Jesus contribute to Hebrews' Christology? Although Hebrews contains some seeds for the later doctrine of preexistence (Heb 1:2-3),[13] it cannot be called docetic because of the balance of its emphasis upon the humanity of the death of Christ. He fully participated in human life and death; he tasted of his experience of death. Moreover, Christ was not a Stoic figure who did not express anguish. Instead, for Jesus, death was an experience of suffering. The author of Hebrews would not tolerate the implication that Christ only seemed to experience death or that dying was an easy undertaking for him. Second, we can further draw the inference that Christ did not easily go through temptation, either. He did not resist temptation in such a way that it had no effect upon him, but it, too, was an experience of suffering. Consequently, the author articulates the suffering of Christ to highlight his full participation in two difficult exigencies of human life, temptation and death.

The author highlights Christ's suffering possibly to gain the audience's sympathy, a common trope in speeches.[14] Equally important, he highlights this emotion to show the Hebrews that they are not alone in their suffering, for Christ has experienced it as well. About the intense passage in ch. 5, John Chrysostom proclaims what this statement says about Christ: "Seest thou that he sets forth nothing else than His care and the exceeding greatness of His love?"[15] Finally, then, his suffering prepares the ground for our ability to investigate the next emotion, his compassion.

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12 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 398-99.

13 James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 206-12; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 497-504.

14 Christopher Carey notes that "stressing the disadvantages of [one's] situation" is a common element of speeches ("Rhetorical Means of Persuasion," in *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action,* ed. Ian Worthington (New York: Routledge, 1994), 26-45).

15 *Homilies on Hebrews* 8.3 (*NPNF* 14:404).

Compassion

We must return to ch. 2 for the first example of Christ's disposition towards men and women. Here the author states that the one who makes holy (presumably Christ) and those who are made holy (those who follow him) are all from one source (God). Based upon this mutual relationship, Christ is not ashamed (ἐπαισχύνομαι) to call them brothers (2:11). The author began this sermonic letter asserting the high place that Christ holds as the reflection of the glory of God and the imprint of God's character (1:3). The author also reminds his readers that all things will be subjected to Christ (2:8). Therefore, those who receive this letter have been made aware of the superiority of Christ. While they have also been instructed Christ was made a little lower than the angels (2:7), this verse is the first time the author makes them aware of the depth of that lowliness. Christ is on the same plane as those whom he saves. He can call his followers ἀδελφοὶ. Not only does Christ accept this relationship, but the author also highlights the fact that this equanimity with humanity does not cause Christ to be ashamed. One might expect that the one who was with God in the act of creation (1:2, 10) might despise being put on the same level with the human creation, but this is not the case.

The lack of shame continues in the way in which the author utilizes the following scriptural citations voiced by Christ. Their tone is certainly one of boldness—boldness to proclaim, praise, and trust upon God (1:12,13)—but also boldness in Christ's relationship with humanity. The tone of the citations expresses Jesus' boldness to reside among his siblings (1:12) and to proclaim their status as brothers and sisters as a gift from God (1:13).

It is clear that the author puts the words of these citations in the mouth of Christ to reveal the fact that he calls humanity ἀδελφός. The citation provides the act (calling them brothers), but the emotion that accompanies it—lack of shame—seems to come from the author's unique formulation and utilization of these texts.[16] This concept of unashamedness highlights the humility of Christ, an important aspect of *ethos* that would help

16 In ch. 11, the author makes a similar statement about God, namely, that God is not ashamed to be called their God (11:16). Hence, the author portrays God and the one sent by God for salvation as not ashamed to be involved with humanity.

the audience warm to the person being extolled.[17] Moreover, the *topos* of shame shows that it is not simply the case that Christ is not embarrassed to be around humanity, but that he is willing to disregard public opinion and accept the social consequences of casting his lot with them,[18] which, as the letter makes clear, entailed his death.

Not only is Christ not ashamed to be counted among humanity, but also he consistently expresses a particular emotion towards them: mercy. In 2:17, the author describes Christ's priestly role by emphasizing that he carried out this role mercifully and faithfully. It is clear that being made like humanity in all things allowed him to be merciful. The suffering of Christ resulted in his compassion; hence, compassion characterizes the way in which Jesus carried out his supreme high priestly mission of making atonement for humanity.

The author returns to the theme of Christ's compassion at the end of ch. 4. After a powerful passage about the exacting eyes of the Word of God, by way of encouragement, the author exhorts the hearers to hold onto their confession by reflecting upon the nature of their high priest. On one side, he is great; he has passed through the heavens and is the Son of God. On the other hand, he is also a high priest who is able to sympathize (συμπαθέω) with the weaknesses of the readers. Here, the author focuses upon the sympathy that arises not from Christ's suffering in death, but in temptation. Christ is sympathetic because he has been tempted in all things, but without sin. Nevertheless, there is no experience of temptation lacking, so in no situation can Christ be unsympathetic. Because the author of Hebrews and his readers have both an exalted and a sympathetic high priest, they can be boldly confident in finding mercy from God's graceful throne. Christ's compassion, then, was not limited to his atoning act, but continues as he sits beside the throne of God.

Following this inspiring exhortation, the author draws a comparison between Christ and high priests on earth. The comparison highlights a difference in the emotive attitude they display. The author describes the high preists' *pathos* as μετριοπαθέω, the ability to moderate emotion.[19] They

17 Carey, "Rhetorical," 27.

18 deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 435.

19 Wilhelm Michaelis, "μετριοπαθέω," *TDNT* 5:938.

can be even-tempered with those who are ignorant and those who are deceived. Closer attention to these cognates, συμπαθέω and μετριοπαθέω, reveals that they are not simply synonymous. Μετριοπαθέω, in literature contemporary with Hebrews, is typically used as an indication of moderating the emotion of anger.[20] The comparison seems to indicate a difference of degree in compassion between typical human priests and Christ. Christ does not merely moderate his feeling towards those who are ignorant, instead he actively sympathizes with them.[21]

How then does Christ's compassion contribute to the author's Christology? When the author asserts that Christ is like humanity in all things, he shows that his full participation in the human experience and the concomitant emotion of compassion are indispensable contributions to his portrayal of Christ as a high priest, both in Christ's one-time act of atonement and in his continuing role before God's throne. In this way, the author seeks to convince the audience of the importance and appeal of Christ's vocation by highlighting his character in this role, particularly the compassion he exudes. Christ is not ashamed that humans are his siblings. Because of their weakness and his experience of that weakness he feels great mercy towards them—greater even than that which earthly high priests are capable—so great that it might even remind the readers of the compassion of God (Exod 22:26; 34:6; 2 Chron 30:9; Neh 9:17; Ps 102:8).

Gladness

If it were not enough for the author to emphasize for his readers that Christ, too, has suffered and, because he has suffered, he is able to be compassionate, the author clinches this line of argument by proclaiming that, in fact, in Christ's suffering and solidarity with humanity, there was joy.

Chapter 1 of Hebrews consists of a catena of citations aimed at showing the high place of Christ, his relation to God the Father, and his ascendancy above the angels. In the second citation in which the author portrays the Father addressing the Son, the author draws from Psalm 44. God

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20 Attridge helpfully lists Philo *Leg. all.* 3.129, 132-34; *Spec. leg.* 3.96; Plutarch *Frat. am.* 18 (489C); *Coh. ir.* 10 (458C); Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 8.61; *Ep. Arist.* 256; Josephus *Ant.* 12.3.2 § 128 (*Hebrews*, 143).

21 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 143-44.

proclaims the throne of the Son as eternal, and the staff of his kingdom as righteous. Furthermore, because of his zeal for righteousness, God has anointed him with the oil of gladness (ἀγαλλίασις, 1:9). This is a term that conveys an exuberant joy and denotes an oil that was used at festivals.[22] This is not a citation that explicitly says Jesus experienced joy. Nonetheless, it sets Jesus in the midst of a situation infused with a celebratory tone and articulates gladness as the medium of his anointing.

Because this is a hymn of enthronement, several scholars assert that the author is using this verse to speak about the exultation of Christ.[23] Consequently, several commentators translate the phrase παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου as "above your fellows,"[24] or "beyond your companions."[25] Because the chapter is a sustained comparison between Christ and the angels, some see this asserting the high place of Christ above the messengers of God.[26] Every other time the author employs the word, μέτοχος, however, it speaks of the human followers of Christ (3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8).[27] If humans are the referent, in what way is Christ beyond them? It could be an indication that he is differentiated from all other sons,[28] or that he was the first to receive the anointing.[29] While these are possible, I disagree that the translation of παρά must be "more than" or "beyond." It could also be translated as "by" or "near," as is allowed by the use of παρά with the accusative.[30] This makes it possible to see Christ as anointed with the oil of gladness in the midst of his companions. Not only is this transla-

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22 "ἀγαλλίασις" *BDAG*, 4.

23 G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 44-51, esp. 49; L.D. Hurst, "The Christology of Hebrews 1-2," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament,* ed. L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (New York: Clarendon, 1987), 149-64; Kenneth L. Schenck, "A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1," *JBL* 120 (2001): 469-85, here 471.

24 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 49; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:30.

25 Koester, *Hebrews*, 195.

26 Lane, *Hebrews*, 30. Attridge sees this as the primary referent, although he does not exclude others (*Hebrews*, 60).

27 Koester advocates for this interpretation (*Hebrews*, 195). Johnson seems to support it as well (*Hebrews*, 80).

28 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 60.

29 Koester, *Hebrews*, 195.

30 "παρά," BDAG, 757.

tion allowed, but it seems to be supported by the other instances of Christ's experience of joy.

The clearest expression of Christ's joy is found in ch. 12. Here, the author encourages the readers to fix their eyes upon Jesus, who is not just another example of faith like those who have come before, but the author and finisher of it (12:2). The author describes the work of Christ in such a way that he serves as an example of an athlete. He endures and despises the difficulties he encounters and finishes his ἀγών, or contest, when he sits at the right hand of God. The content is clearly from the traditions of Jesus' life and death, because this is the only reference to the cross. Yet it seems that the author's own particular emphasis is prominent in articulating the joy of Christ.

The pertinent phrase for this study is ἀντι τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς, his endurance of the cross is in some way related to the joy that lay before him. What is not immediately clear is if he endured the cross instead of the joy that was set before him or for that joy.[31] In other words, how do we translate the preposition, ἀντί? Was there another more joyful and less difficult path which Christ could have chosen[32] or did joy lie beyond, yet only through, the cross?

The author of Hebrews uses the preposition only one other time, in the warning that utilizes the story of Esau (12:16-17). The pattern the author employs is the same. Esau did not give up his birthright instead of enjoying the meal, but gave up his birthright for the purpose of enjoying the meal. It is possible that the author used the preposition in different ways each time, but this parallel pattern seems to support the interpretation of ἀντί, as "for the purpose of."

	REL PRO	PREP	OBJ OF PREPOSITION	VERB	DIRECT OBJ
12:2	ὅς	ἀντί	χαρᾶς	ὑπέμεινεν	σταυρὸν
12:16	ὅς	ἀντί	βρώσεως μιᾶς	ἀπέδετο	πρωτοτόκια

31 "ἀντί," BDAG, 87-88.

32 Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:413.

Not only is this translation allowed by this preposition, but also it seems to be assumed by the governing metaphor. The author is drawing from a common Greco-Roman *topoi*, that of the athletic contest. This metaphor included endurance for the sake of a reward.[33] When one is running a race, joy is not found in something other than the race, in doing something easier than finishing the contest. In fact, not finishing and choosing to do something less demanding would be a great source of disappointment. Joy only lies ahead, at the end of and through the completion of the race. Moreover, in other sections of the letter, the author says that Christ came to do the will of God (10:9), which included perfection through the suffering of death (2:10; 5:9). Consequently, it seems that Christ endured the cross knowing that joy lay only in completing the will of the Father. Even in the midst of suffering death on a cross, Christ had some view of the joy would come after it.

It is interesting to inquire what the joy entailed. This passage does not make the content of the joy completely clear. It is related, it seems, to the fact that Christ gets to take his position seated next to the throne of God, but I would argue there is something more at which the author is aiming. Christ's joy came not just in sitting next to the Father, but in what that position of authority let him achieve for humanity. If the joy that lay before Christ was the completion of God's will, the letter makes clear that God's will for him was to make sanctification possible for humanity, that they, too, could go beyond the veil and come into the presence of God. It seems quite possible, then, that Christ's joy was that he would become the savior of humanity and in so doing ultimately reside in God's presence with them. Theodoret of Cyrus interpreted this verse in precisely that way, "The savior's joy is the salvation of human beings."[34] In a passage in which these verses are clearly in view, medieval mystic Julian of Norwich reflects upon the joy of Christ and links it with the salvation of humankind. "For Jesus has great joy in all the deeds which he has done for our salvation. . . . We are his bliss, we are his reward, we are his honor, we are his crown. What

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33 This common discussion is also seen in Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.24.1-3; 3.22.51 and Cicero, *De officiis* 3.10.12 (Johnson, *Hebrews*, 318).

34 Theodoret, *Commentary on Hebrews,* trans. Robert Charles Hill; 2 vols. (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox, 2001), 2:188.

I am describing now is so great a joy to Jesus that he counts as nothing his labor and his bitter suffering and his cruel and shameful death."[35]

This seems even more possible when we consider another example of Christ's joy in the letter. As we have seen in ch. 2, the author utilizes citations from Psalms and Isaiah as Christ's statements of his position as brother with humanity. In addition, these citations could also reveal an instance of the joyful aspect of the *ethos* of Christ. Here, Jesus says, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers; In the midst of the assembly, I will praise you" (12:12). Admittedly, the emotive aspect is not explicit here, but is implicit in the act of praising. What is clear in this instance is that Christ exudes this joy in the midst of his human siblings.

This simple quotation gains importance when we recognize from where this citation is drawn. This is a verse from Psalm 22 (LXX 21:23).[36] Not only is this a frequently referenced psalm throughout the New Testament (Luke 18:7; Rom 5:5; 1 Pet 5:8; 2 Tim 4:17; Rev 19:5), this is, of course, a lament psalm from which Jesus' cry of abandonment is taken in Matthew and Mark (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). Here, the author of Hebrews, who is known to draw from uncommon pieces of common texts, quotes from the first lines of the exuberant section of praise, rather than the excruciating lament. In a section of the letter infused with discussions of the suffering and death of Christ (2:9, 10, 15), the beginning of this Psalm cannot have escaped the notice of this author. It functions, then, to put into sharp relief the joy of Christ. Christ is joyful not just in the midst of his brethren, but if we take the context of the psalm into consideration, he is joyful particularly in the midst of his suffering.

There is some joy in view in Christ's great struggle. It seems possible that the joy is being among humanity, calling them brothers, acting as their savior, and leading them into God's presence. So, how does the emotion of joy function for the author? Rhetorically, it helps the author present Christ as a rounded character, one who both weeps and who rejoices. With these additions, the emotive Christ is not solely serious and dour, but joyful as well. He is no flatter than the multidimensional humans he saves. More-

35 Julian of Norwich, *Showings,* trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (WCS; New York: Paulist, 1978), 145-46.

36 The only alteration comes when the author alters διήγησις το ἀπαγγέλλω, which is a more common word (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 166).

over, the author, in highlighting the joy of Christ, helps to construct his relation to God and God's will for him. When God anoints him, makes him a brother of humanity, and when God allows him to suffer and die, he finds joy in completing the will of God. Even more interesting, it is clear that in all instances in which Christ's joy is highlighted, the context of that joy is Christ's experience on behalf of humanity. Becoming the Savior of humanity, even though it will cost him his life in an excruciating and shameful way, brings joy to Jesus. It may be no mistake that joy is the emotion highlighted here in this climactic section of Hebrews. What a convincing move for the author's rhetorical purpose. The author essentially says to his readers, "Not only did he suffer, not only is he able to be compassionate because of his suffering, but in the face of suffering on a cross, he had joy, knowing that he could be called your brother and bring you into the praise of God. If Christ has great joy in being your Savior, how then can you grieve him by growing weary and turning away?"

II. CONCLUSION

Living up to his reputation as a skilled practitioner of rhetoric, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews consistently and artfully highlights the emotions of Christ in order to construct an enticing *ethos* of the heavenly high priest. When the author highlights the emotions of Christ, he draws from biblical texts, contemporary metaphors, and traditions about Jesus. Because these instances of emotion often come from the author's own interpretations of his sources, it seems to be a particular emphasis of this author. Why might this be important for him?

The ancient authorities on rhetoric asserted that the *ethos* conveyed in a speech is to find pathetical resonance with the makeup or *ethos* of the audience. In many ways the author does argue that Christ has experienced the emotions his readers are experiencing (4:15; 12:4). He portrays Christ as one who can empathize with their suffering because he, too, has experienced it fully. The author does not simply construct a certain picture of Jesus to warm the hearts of his listeners, however, but sets up this image of Christ as an example to follow. Like Christ, not only do the audience members all experience suffering, but also they are to endure it (12:2, 7).

Like Christ, they, too, should have compassion (12:12; 13:1-2). Like Christ, they, too, should joyfully praise God (13:15). The emotions of Christ portray him as a rich and attractive character while also providing a paradigm for the audience to follow.

The primary concern of the author is not just to share with believers that they should be more like Jesus, but to persuade these brothers and sisters (3:1) to hold fast to their high priest until the end (3:14). In portraying Christ as one who has suffered, the author allows the audience to find solidarity with Christ. In portraying him as one who is compassionate because of that suffering, the author allows the audience to find empathy in Christ. In portraying him as being joyful because of what that suffering would bring, the author gives the audience a compelling reason to remain committed to this Savior.

Christologically, attending to the *ethos* of Christ, and particularly his emotions, helps us construct an even richer picture of the Christ of Hebrews. From this angle we see clearly the full spectrum and depth of his human experience. In dying and in temptation he suffered, even issuing cries and tears to God. Moreover, these emotive experiences are not limited to his time upon earth. His suffering resulted in a compassion that he exudes as the eternal high priest (7:25). Formerly he sung God's praises among his brethren, but now he resides in the joy to which he looked forward and continues to look forward to the ultimate joy when all things are under his feet. As a result, these emotive descriptions help us to see more clearly not just Christ's human experience but also the manner in which he enacts his office, and the nature of his character as High Priest.

The picture of Christ in this unique letter reminds its readers to hold fast to this High Priest because he is seasoned in suffering, compassionate, and joyful. Consequently, they are compelled to respond to him by emulating his *ethos* and, in endurance, mercy, and joy, finish the race that lies before them.

KOINONIA XX (2008) 27-33

The Panegyric to the Hebrews: A Response to Amy Peeler

MATTHEW V. NOVENSON

There is a certain irony in the fact that Amy Peeler presents her paper "With Tears and Joy: The Emotions of Christ in Hebrews" in this venerable lecture hall under the watchful eye of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, who in 1912, a stone's throw from where we sit today, wrote the classic little study, "On the Emotional Life of Our Lord."[1] Warfield's sources are the canonical Gospels, and he undertakes to investigate "the emotions ascribed to Jesus in the Evangelical narratives."[2] But near the end of that study, Warfield leaves behind the evangelical narratives and comments instead on the subject of my colleague's essay. While the Gospels do speak to the emotions of Jesus, Warfield opines, "The highest note is struck by the Epistle to the Hebrews.... [in which,] when we observe [Christ] exhibiting the movements of his human emotions, we are gazing on the very process of our salvation."[3] That Warfield turns aside to Hebrews in order to make his point about the Gospels is, I take it, indirect evidence that Peeler is basically right. Hebrews is at pains, in a way that no other first-century Christian text is, to reflect upon the affective aspects of Jesus' experience, so that the theologians are warranted when they appeal to Hebrews in certain finer points of Christological discussion. As I see it, Peeler's excellent paper provides us with a plausible historical-critical (more specifically, rhetorical-critical) rationale for this legitimate theological use of our text. For my part, I come to Peeler's essay as a Paulinist, which for fifteen centuries would have made me a Hebrews scholar but does so no longer.

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1 B. B. Warfield, "On the Emotional Life of Our Lord," in Princeton Theological Seminary, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York: Scribner's, 1912), 35-90.

2 Warfield, 38.

3 Warfield, 88-89.

Nevertheless, I think I can contribute to the discussion that she initiates by raising questions about several aspects of her argument, which I will do under three headings.

First of all, I would like to speak to Peeler's exegesis of the epistle, with which I have little disagreement. She makes a generally compelling case for her thesis, although some particular arguments are stronger than others. Peeler is surely right to make much of the word πάθημα and cognates, which are conspicuously present in Hebrews, but there are problems with her analysis of the word group. Peeler glosses πάθημα with "the emotional experience of suffering" (Peeler, 16). This is a fair account of the semantic range of the word, but it conflates at least two discrete definitions. πάθημα can mean either "suffering, thing suffered" or "passion, emotion"; but in any particular case, it is typically used to mean one or the other of these things, not both.[4] In fact, both πάθημα and its cousin πάθος can carry either of these meanings, but in actual usage, the former more often means the former and the latter the latter. In this connection, it may be significant that our author never uses πάθος, only πάθημα.

Later in the same section, Peeler wants to suggest 12:2 ("Jesus, who for the joy laid before him endured the cross") as evidence for her suffering-as-emotion motif. "As the only mention of the cross in the entire work, this reference would have carried notions of suffering, both physical and emotional for the readers" (Peeler, 16). Here she reasons from the word σταυρός to "notions of suffering" to emotional notions in particular, but this is rather further than one would like to have to carry evidence. Granted, "suffering" signifies an aspect of lived experience, one part of which, for human beings at least, is emotion. But it is imprecise, even false, to suggest that this whole bundle of associated concepts is contained in the word "suffering." I do not think this objection strikes at the heart of Peeler's thesis, only that her semantic argument in section one should run differently than it in fact does.

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4 See LSJ, s.v. πάθημα. In 2:9, one is struck that πάθημα appears in the singular, the only such instance in the New Testament and one of few in extant Greek literature (cf. Arrian, *anab.* 4.22.2; 6.11.2-3). Walter Bauer takes this to suggest that the genitive construction is epexegetical (BDAG, s.v. πάθημα), and I am inclined to agree: τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου, "the suffering of death," here means "the death that he suffered."

The section on gladness is very well argued. Peeler's case for reading ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς in 12:2 as "*for the purpose of* [not *instead of*] the joy laid before him" is impressive, even here where all the major English versions agree with her (Peeler, 22). All the more impressive is her ingenious argument for reading παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου (in Heb 1:9, if not in Ps 44:7 LXX) as "*in the presence of* your fellows" rather than "*more than* your fellows," against most major English versions (Peeler, 21). And while it does not follow that God's anointing in 1:9 "makes him a brother of humanity" (Peeler, 24) (it is that he is anointed *in their presence*, not that he is anointed *like they are*), Peeler's translation is admirably sensitive to the author's capacity for exploiting the ambiguity of certain biblical words and phrases to accord with the near context of his own discourse.

I am less persuaded by Peeler's invocation of ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως, "oil of gladness," in 1:9 as evidence of the feeling of joy on Christ's part. That "gladness [is] the medium of his anointing" (Peeler, 21) is certainly an overstatement. Oil is the medium of the anointment; gladness specifies which oil it is with which Christ is anointed. There is also the word ἀγαλλίασις itself, on which Peeler comments, "This is a term that conveys an exuberant joy" (Peeler, 21). But while "gladness" or "rejoicing" is an apt gloss, ἀγαλλίασις comes from the lexicon of the cultus (both pagan and Israelite), not that of human affective experience. An ἄγαλμα, literally "object of rejoicing" or "celebrated thing," is simply a temple artifact, a vessel or an altar or a statue.[5] It is analogous to the English word "festal," which, although etymologically related to partying, typically just means "pertaining to a holy day." In short, I mean to say that Peeler's account of the joy of Christ in Hebrews would be stronger without this putative piece of evidence than it is with it.

I have questions, too, about her understanding of the citation of Ps 21:23 LXX in Heb 2:12, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you." Peeler comments, "Admittedly, the emotive aspect is not explicit here, but is implicit in the act of praising" (Peeler, 24). She then reasons from the fact that our author "quotes from

5 See LSJ, s.v. ἄγαλμα.

the first lines of the exuberant section of praise, rather than the excruciating lament" (Peeler, 24) to conclude that the function of the citation is "to put into sharp relief the joy of Christ" (Peeler, 24). But even if we grant that the affection of joy is implicit in the Greek verb ὑμνέω (which is not at all obvious, in my view), why should our author's selection of this particular verse serve to contrast with its psalmic context rather than allude to its psalmic context? In other words, why not read the citation to mean, "All my misery notwithstanding, yet I will praise you," rather than, "With joy as opposed to misery, I will praise you"? In keeping with a pattern attested across the psalms of lament, it is not that the psalmist was miserable but now is joyful; rather it is that he is still miserable but confident nonetheless. In short, I am not convinced that the affection of gladness is as implicit in this act of praising as Peeler understands it to be.

My second set of comments has to do with Peeler's application of canons of ancient rhetoric to the epistle. Here I have reservations about her move from the emotions of Christ to the rhetorical category of ἦθος. A great deal hinges on her premise that, per ancient rhetorical convention, "Christ's emotions [are] a key element in the overall portrayal of Christ's *ethos*" (Peeler 12), that Hebrews "highlights the emotions of Christ in order to construct an enticing *ethos* [of Christ]" (Peeler, 25). But Aristotle, at least, classifies emotion under the heading not of ἦθος but rather of πάθος, as the word itself suggests. For him, ἦθος and πάθος are two of the three different classes of πίστεις, "proofs." What is more, Aristotle's πίστεις pertain to different parties in the rhetorical encounter: ἦθος to the speaker, πάθος to the auditors, and λόγος to the speech itself. In the matter before us, when Aristotle speaks of πάθη, "emotions," he has in view the emotions of the auditors, not the speaker (much less the speaker's client, on which more in a moment). "The orator persuades by means of his hearers when they are roused to emotion by his speech" (*Rhet.* 1.2.5).[6] And again, "The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgments" (*Rhet.* 2.1.8).

The closest thing I know to Peeler's premise is Cicero, *De or.* 2.189z: "It is impossible for the listener to feel [any emotion]... unless all those

6 Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese (LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1926, 1994); translations of Aristotle follow Freese unless otherwise noted.

emotions which the advocate would inspire in the arbitrator are visibly stamped or rather branded on the advocate himself."[7] But even this gets us only as far as the speaker, not all the way back to the client, where the emotion presumably lies in the case of Hebrews. And even for Cicero, emotion pertains primarily to the auditors, inasmuch as he speaks of "the emotions which eloquence has to excite in the minds of the tribunal, or whatever other audience we may be addressing" (*De or.* 2.206).[8]

Peeler might find more support in Quintilian, who understands ἦθος and πάθος as being very closely related ("I am prepared to add that *pathos* and *ethos* are sometimes of the same nature, and differ only in degree" [*Inst.* 6.12]) and grudgingly subsumes both under the Latin word *adfectus*, "emotion," being dissatisfied with the popular equivalency *mores* for ἦθος.[9] This taxonomy, less so Cicero's, and Aristotle's not at all, will work for Peeler's thesis. And in fact, since Quintilian is much closer in time to Hebrews than Aristotle is, it might be worthwhile to explore a possible shift in the meaning of the terms from the late classical to the Roman period. This might actually give Peeler greater leverage for her use of emotions as evidence of specifically ethical, rather than pathetic, presentation.

Then there is the matter of the ἦθος of the client. Is it right to talk about ἦθος, as Peeler does, as a feature not of the speaker but of the person being represented? Aristotle, for his part, speaks only about the ἦθος τοῦ λέγοντος, "the moral character of the speaker," whose function is ἀξιόπιστον ποιῆσαι τὸν λέγοντα, "to render the speaker trustworthy" (*Rhet.* 1.2.3-4).[10] Quintilian, again, is perhaps closer to Peeler's usage, since he allows that ἦθος applies, in a secondary sense, to the client. "Since the orator needs to demonstrate these qualities, if he can, in his client too,

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7 Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942, 1988); translations of Cicero follow Sutton and Rackham unless otherwise noted.

8 Cf. *De or.* 2.178: "Nothing in oratory, Catulus, is more important than to win for the orator the favor of his hearer, and to have the latter so affected as to be swayed by something resembling a mental impulse or emotion [*animi et perturbatione*], rather than by judgment or deliberation."

9 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. Donald A. Russell (LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); translations of Quintilian follow Russell unless otherwise noted.

10 My translation.

he must at any rate possess, or be thought to possess, them himself" (*Inst.* 6.2.18).[11] But even Quintilian speaks of ἦθος primarily as a quality *quod a dicentibus desideramus*, "which we desire from speakers" (*Inst.* 6.2.13). If I am right about this (and Peeler, who knows her handbooks better than I do, may know a way around this problem), then the well known "diminished authorial presence" of the author of Hebrews represents a real problem. If ἦθος pertains to the speaker, and our speaker is hidden from view, then we might wonder whether ἦθος is the right category at all.

But maybe this need not be a problem after all, because maybe we ought not to think of Christ in the role of client. For the most part, Peeler's essay assumes rather than argues for this identification. By way of contributing to the conversation, I would like to hazard an alternative rhetorical-critical proposal, namely, that Jesus relates to the author of Hebrews not as client to advocate but rather as hero to panegyrist. Hebrews does not defend Christ; it hymns him. When our author writes, "Let us run with endurance the contest laid before us, looking upon Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy laid before him endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2), he speaks in the mode of Pericles at the memorial for the Athenians slain in the first year of the Peloponnesian War: "Fix your gaze upon the power of Athens and become lovers of her, and when the vision of her greatness has inspired you, reflect that all this has been acquired by men of courage who knew their duty and in the hour of conflict were moved by a high sense of honor" (Thucydides, 2.43.1).[12] As Pericles rallies the Athenians to the cause of the war by celebrating the noble dead, so the author of Hebrews urges his audience to steadfastness by hymning the excellencies of Christ. If we conceive the rhetorical encounter in Hebrews along these lines, then a number of the category difficulties I have raised are obviated.

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11 For Cicero, too, something like ἦθος pertains both to the speaker and to his client. "A potent factor in success, then, is for the characters [*mores*], principles, conduct and course of life, both of those who are to plead cases and of their clients, to be approved... and for the feelings of the tribunal to be won over, as far as possible, to goodwill towards the advocate and the advocate's client, as well [*cum erga oratorem tum erga illum pro quo dicet orator*]" (*De or.* 2.182).

12 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. C. Foster Smith (LCL; New York: Putnam's, 1919).

Third and finally, I would like to raise one methodological question. At several points in her paper, Peeler reasons that the author's choice of emotion-language with respect to Christ is significant because such language is not necessary to the argument being made. She writes, for example, "the use of this term... allows the author to express his thought *more fully than is strictly necessary*" (Peeler, 13; emphasis mine).[13] I think I understand this line of reasoning, and I can see its intuitive force. It is analogous to some traditional theological arguments for the freedom of God: because someone did not have to do something, his doing so is therefore all the more remarkable. But I worry that in the present case the argument is not sound, which is actually not a problem, since I do not think that Peeler needs it for her overall project to work. There are two things to be said on this subject.

First, how do we know just what is and is not logically necessary to an author's point? Ancient authors (and modern ones, too, for that matter) frequently write more than they really need to have done. On the other hand, too, they often write a good deal *less* than logic would seem to demand, as Pauline interpreters, for example, have learned from hard experience. I take this to mean that, methodologically, it is impossible for us to make judgments as to what an author needed to say in such a way as to weigh it against what he did in fact say. For better or worse, all we have are actual texts, not their hypothetical counterparts in which the same ideas are expressed in logically minimal simplicity.[14] The second thing, though, is that, on the interpretive model that Peeler herself commends to us, this putative distinction between a logically necessary kernel and a rhetorically contingent husk falls down. Peeler shows us a Hebrews that is thoroughly steeped in the linguistic conventions of ancient Greek and Roman persuasive discourse. Our author writes the way he does because that is the kind of author that he is, and that is enough. Peeler's Hebrews convinces its auditors of the moral beauty of Christ not because the author did not need to say it that way but did so anyway, but rather because he did need to say it in just that way.

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13 Elsewhere: "One could imagine another author making the same point without using [this word]" (3); "It could have been said more succinctly" (3); "The basic point could have been conveyed without the use of the emotive term" (4).

14 With the possible exception of some reconstructions of Q.

KOINONIA XX (2008) 34-46

Jesus' Cross as Tragic Event: The Christologies of Jon Sobrino and Hans Urs von Balthasar

STEVEN BATTIN

In the wake of the massacres at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, it seems appropriate for U.S. Catholics within the academy to ask what Catholic theologians have to say specifically about tragedy and how their treatment of tragedy affects their understanding of Christ, or even perhaps, conversely, how their Christology gives shape to their understanding of tragedy. To this end, I turn to Jon Sobrino and Hans Urs von Balthasar, two exemplary Catholic thinkers who have taken seriously the need to address the reality of tragedy in theological discourse. The crux of the Christological question I wish to engage manifests itself precisely in the juxtaposition of tragedy and salvation. Tragedy—as it shall be principally used in this paper—entails an irrevocable loss, whereas salvation, at its minimal connotative limit, implies the successful prevention of loss and, at its maximal connotative limit (as expressed in Christian doctrine), it implies a positive gain. The question that will concern us can thus be put in two ways: "Does salvation negate the actuality of tragedy?" and "Does tragedy negate the actualization of salvation?" Formulated Christologically, we may ask whether the tragedy of Jesus' cross is necessarily overshadowed by its cosmos-encompassing theological import, or whether an acknowledgement of the cross as a tragedy for Jesus himself necessarily precludes ascribing salvific efficacy to the crucifixion. Both Sobrino and Balthasar provide intriguing responses to the problem, ultimately resisting the temptation to reside within the boundaries of an "either/or" with respect to the relationship between tragedy and salvation.

As I hope to show, in differing ways, Balthasar and Sobrino maintain that salvation is possible only to the extent that Jesus' crucifixion is in some way preserved precisely as a tragic event.

I. THE GENERAL SENSES OF TRAGEDY IN BALTHASAR AND SOBRINO

The term tragedy has been subject to many specifications within literary and philosophical literature. Though even a brief survey of the literature is well beyond the scope of this paper, it is helpful to see how Balthasar and Sobrino specify the term.

There are at least four senses of tragedy in use throughout the *Theo-Drama*,[1] although, to my knowledge, Balthasar does little to systematically distinguish them. I shall list them in the order by which he seems to privilege them in usage. First, by tragedy Balthasar means a literary category, a poetic genre or sub-genre (i.e. a particular species of drama). The form of the tragedy-as-genre is itself determined by three possible "modes of the tragic,"[2] each of which is distinguished by its fundamental attitude toward the idea of a reconciliation between diametrically opposed commitments. These tragic modes all share an underlying view of the tragic as unavoidable and conflictive, which, in fact, is the second predominant sense of tragedy in the *Theo-Drama*, namely, tragedy as inevitable conflict. In the third sense, tragedy is philosophically construed as an existential-ontological condition of finitude which constitutes an "essential tragic dimension" of human drama.[3] Human existence itself is not identical to this condition—that is to say, it is not a tragedy *per se*—but it has as a constitutive dimension the tragedy of finitude. Balthasar's fourth meaning of tragedy comes closest to what is perhaps most often meant in colloquial English, that is, tragedy as a personal loss (of one's own life or that of a loved one) that is in some sense evitable and in no way necessary. To borrow a phrase from

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1 Han Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison, 5 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988-98). Hereafter cited as *TD*.

2 *TD 1*: 425-62.

3 *TD 2*: 39, 49, 53.

Marilyn McCord Adams, tragedy is "meaning-destroying."[4] This last sense of the term, the one that applies most to actual human tragedy, seems to be used by Balthasar solely with respect to God.[5]

For Sobrino, the general meaning of tragedy is first and foremost the unjust, premature loss of life, a loss that is meaningless or meaning-destroying: "there is historical evil, the evil inflicted deliberately and unjustly on some human beings by others, which has no meaning in itself."[6] Sobrino also speaks of something like a "tragic dimension" to life in history, going so far as to offhandedly remark that "history in itself is cruel,"[7] a statement he later qualifies when he speaks of the imperial assumption that the "culture of Dives and Lazarus" is the normal way of life.[8] Such historical relations, for Sobrino, constitute a tragedy. Finally, Sobrino maintains a tension between the evitability and inevitability of conflict that results in tragedy and is in itself tragic. Intra-human conflict seems inevitable; however, this is far from proffering an ontology of violence, but is a historical observation. Furthermore, Sobrino's point is that it need not be this way; the world may be otherwise—conflict, and hence tragedy, is evitable. But the mystery of inequity that is bound up with the mystery of human freedom frustrates the actualization of this possibility, perpetuating histories of injustice and mercilessness that result in the tragic premature death of countless innocent victims.

II. TRAGEDY "FROM ABOVE" AND TRAGEDY "FROM BELOW"

While tragedy has a central role in the theologies of both Balthasar and Sobrino, they differ with regard to the locus of the tragic event(s) that should overdetermine the Church's theological comportment. On the one hand, Balthasar suggests what can be called a view of tragedy "from above"; on

4 Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), i.

5 See *TD 5*.

6 Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Pau Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993), 241. Sobrino further specifies tragedy in terms of physical, historical death brought about by earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, wars, etc. in *Where Is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006).

7 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 199.

8 Sobrino, *Where Is God?*, ix.

the other hand, Sobrino proposes a theological view of tragedy "from below." These two views are informed by a commitment to a theocentric perspective and a historio-centric perspective, respectively.

It is not insignificant that the specter of real tragedy appears with palpable dimensions within Balthasar's theo-dramatic account of salvation history only in the "final act." Within the confines of a literary and theatrical paradigm, the tragic determination of a drama only discloses itself in the ending. Accordingly, the last volume of the *Theo-Drama* pertains to the *eschaton*, and it is with respect to the "last things" that Balthasar gives account of the real possibility of tragedy for salvation history.

What is unique about Balthasar's eschatological conjectures is his contention that a salvation history that ends tragically does not end so primarily for humanity but for God. Creation and the history of its redemption are all initiatives of God, and it would be a detriment to God's glory if any portion of his creation were lost to perdition.[9] Additionally, Balthasar provides Trinitarian specifications to this dilemma: the mysterious interchange between Father and Son, which is productive of and carried out through the Holy Spirit, presupposes an infinite "distance" between Father and Son, a distance that is the locus of a creation,[10] whose eventual eucharistic transformation constitutes a "return" to the God in whom it is already mysteriously "embedded."[11] This "return" is nothing less than the full incorporation into the divine life itself. But just as the Son holds nothing back in returning himself to the Father, so too nothing of creation is to be held back; God is desirous of a full return.[12] Hell's victory over a portion of creation is, therefore, a devastating defeat for a Trinitarian God. If, therefore, the final act concludes tragically, it is a tragedy for God.[13]

Having described Balthasar's perspective regarding tragedy as theocentric, it is, perhaps, tempting to characterize Sobrino's perspective as anthropocentric. This, however, would be an erroneous and misleading characterization. It is more accurate to say that Sobrino's treatment of

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9 See *TD* 5: 191-93.

10 See *TD* 5: 105.

11 See *TD* 5: 375-85.

12 See *TD* 5: 503-21.

13 See *TD* 5: 193.

tragedy is historio-centric. History (or rather: historical reality) is both the meeting place of God and humanity and the place where tragedy happens. Influenced by his friend, collaborator, and one of the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador, Ignacio Ellacuria, Sobrino understands history as a dynamic reality that encompasses and is constituted by the natural, the personal, and the social.[14] Furthermore, because human suffering and tragedies occur within historical reality and as part of historical reality, they have a theological dimension, which is to say they intrinsically bear the weight of the divine presence. What this theological dimension of historical reality really means is best expressed by Ellacuria in his essay "The Historicity of Christian Salvation": "God can be separated from history, but history cannot be separated from God. . . . [E]ven in the case of sin we are fully in the history of salvation; sin does not make God disappear, but rather crucifies God, which seems like the same thing but in fact is profoundly different."[15] Therefore, for Sobrino, for whom God is a God of life, unjust and premature human death in history is a tragedy for both human beings and God.[16]

III. THE TRAGEDY OF JESUS' CROSS

As Christian theologians, neither Balthasar nor Sobrino want to undermine the conviction that, on the cross, God accomplished something good and positive. The question for us at this point is to what extent each acknowledges the historical meaninglessness of Jesus' cross.

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14 For an in-depth English study of Ignacio Ellacuria's historical soteriology in the context of "historical reality," see Kevin Burke's *The Ground Beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuria* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000). See also *Love that Produces Hope: The Thought of Ignacio Ellacuria*, ed. Kevin Burke and Robert Anthony Lassalle-Klein (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2006), in particular the contributions of Antonio Gonzáles, "Assessing the Philosophical Achievement of Ignacio Ellacuria"; Lassalle-Klein, "Ignacio Ellacuria's Debt to Xavier Zubiri: Critical Principles for a Latin American Philosophy and Theology of Liberation"; and Burke, "Christian Salvation and the Disposition of Transcendence: Ignacio Ellacuria's Historical Soteriology." The influence of Ellacuria's view of "historical reality" on Sobrino is clearly visible in the latter's discussion of "historical salvation" in *Jesus the Liberator*, 125-26 and 222. In the next section I will discuss how Sobrino subtly applies Ellacuria's view to explicate the various dimensions of Jesus' cross.

15 Ignacio Ellacuria, "The Historicity of Christian Salvation," in *Mysterium Liberationis* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 255.

16 See Sobrino, *Where Is God?*, 15, 23.

At first glance, Balthasar does not seem to account adequately for the tragedy of the cross for Jesus himself. In reference to Jesus' historical crucifixion, Balthasar seems to apply only one of the meanings of tragedy listed above, viz., tragedy as an inevitable dilemma. The "tragedy of the Cross," Balthasar avers, must have been "foreseen and forewilled from all eternity" as the only possible outcome given the autonomy of finite human freedom. With respect to the Triune God, however, the possible tragedy is real tragedy—real loss—because it is evitable.

Furthermore, when speaking of the cross, Balthasar's preferred terminology to describe both Jesus' experience and the event of crucifixion is "abandonment."[17] Primarily a transcendental and theological category, this abandonment is far from real historical tragedy, i.e. real, painful, evitable personal loss, since by Balthasar's own account it is the "most meaningful" event imaginable; it transcendentally "undergirds" everything the world calls tragic; it is a mystery that relativizes all literary categories of tragedy[18] as well as the expression of a "philosophical law" that God's nearness is proportionately countermeasured by God's veiledness.[19]

Jesus' experience of death, according to Balthasar, is at once the experience of life, since his death is the earthly "translation" of his eternal, Trinitarian, obedient self-giving to the Father.[20] Jesus' experience of death also "surpasses" all human tragedy; it is a "super-tragedy" of God-forsakenness that no human being will ever experience,[21] and as such the only event before which our guilt is reflected back to us.[22]

Finally, Balthasar presents the cross as the absolutely necessary condition for establishing the possibility of preventing a theocentric tragedy. Jesus' death succumbs to a causal functionalization: his death is a means to descend into hell; descent into hell is a means of emptying and closing off hell;

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17 *TD 5*: 94, 212-13, 229, 252, 255.

18 *TD 1*: 429.

19 *TD 4*: 283 n54.

20 *TD 5*: 246

21 *TD 3*, 162.

22 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, trans. D. C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 67.

and cordoning off hell is a means of making human persons decide their own fate, to accept their guilt or to eternally resist God with the infinitesimal degree of purgatorial freedom at their disposal.[23]

Sobrino seems to fare better than Balthasar when it comes to accounting for the tragic aspect of Jesus' historical crucifixion. Within his Christology, the good news of salvation for humanity does not immediately erase the meaning-defeating event of historical human crucifixion. This is because of Sobrino's view of reality as a historical-transcendent whole. There is between the historical and the transcendent a unity without identity, and Sobrino alternates between these two distinct but inseparable aspects of reality, providing four analyses of Jesus' death, each of which can be expressed interrogatively: Why was Jesus killed? Why did Jesus die? What is the relationship of the cross to God in Godself? What is the relationship of Jesus' crucifixion to other historical victims?[24] The first question observes Jesus' cross itself in its historical aspect. The second question reflects upon Jesus' death itself from the transcendent aspect. The dyadic character of reality is attended to in the next two questions, and in relation to Jesus' crucifixion, the transcendent God is manifested as a crucified God and the historical victims are understood to be a crucified people.

There is not enough space to go into Sobrino's treatment of the cross with respect to question three, though I will discuss questions two and four below. Question one deserves mention here, since it bears directly upon the perception of Jesus' cross as a tragic event for Jesus himself. Sobrino's historical Jesus sheds no crocodile tears; his emotional, psychological, and existential anguish and his physical pain are genuine because they are exactly like ours. In his resistance to prematurely adding something "more" to Jesus' death, Sobrino enables his reader's attention to linger in respectful silence before proceeding to theologize the cross.[25] It must be noted that Sobrino does speak of Jesus' crucifixion as a "historical necessity," but he says this in order to counter the idea that Jesus' death was in some way "accidental," as though it had no cause. At the same time, Sobrino

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23 See *TD 5*: 291-300, 363, 367. It must, however, be noted that the human person does not get the last word; God renders the final verdict. See *TD 5*: 295.

24 These questions correspond to chs. 7, 8, 9, and 10 of *Jesus the Liberator*.

25 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 235.

does not want to ascribe a transcendental cause that results in the Father desiring that his Son die a violent death. His point is that the causes are historical and that Jesus' death is a consequence of faithfully carrying out his mission in a world where the violent action of rulers are determined by their egotism, lies, corruption, and subtle—but death-dealing—idolatry.[26] The outcome of Jesus' action is tragic not solely because there is an aspect of inevitability (as we also find in Balthasar as a law and to which history testifies with the blood of the prophets), but also because the rulers that crucified Jesus could have acted otherwise. For Sobrino, the evitability of all unjust premature human death, including Jesus', undermines the temptation to posit a theoretical or theological justification of tragedy in terms of an absolute necessity, whether human or divine.[27] Such a legitimate reserve in the face of tragedy does raise questions about the place of salvation in Sobrino's Christology.

IV. TRAGEDY AND SALVATION: "THE EYE-TO-EYE CONFRONTATION"

From the point of view of the victims of history as theologically expressed by Sobrino, Balthasarian Christology seems to functionalize the historical death of Jesus, voiding it of its meaninglessness for Jesus himself. Devoid of an atonement "theory," Sobrino's Christology, from a Balthasarian perspective, seems to leave no room for an adequately dramatic conceptualization of salvation. There is no room in this paper to explore the possible complementarity of Sobrino's and Balthasar's respective approaches; a suggestion indicating a structural point of convergence will have to suffice.

While not denying that there are perhaps irreconcilable differences in methodology and content, I want to suggest that they nevertheless proffer a common insight regarding the interrelation of tragedy and salvation as

26 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 199.

27 Sobrino writes, "Our choice, I believe, is to live with a theodicy unresolved in theory, and with a practice that goes on opening a pathway—with God walking it beside us—through the history of suffering. . . . [To] understand the yearning for resurrection, not as an easy answer to the problem of God . . . not as an equally easy, theoretical way of imagining a happy ending, but as an expression of love for the victims. To stop protesting would mean burying the victims forever—and allowing more to come after them" (*Jesus the Liberator*, 142, 144).

disclosed in Jesus' crucifixion. In so doing, I propose that each sufficiently addresses the ostensible lacuna in his own Christology. Balthasar says that the "eye-to-eye confrontation" is at the origin of tragedy and characterizes the "pure style" of the tragic.[28] For Balthasar and Sobrino it is precisely this dramatic face-to-face encounter with the victim of meaning-destroying tragedy that constitutively conditions the possibility of salvation.

The formal structure, for both Balthasar and Sobrino, has five moments: (1) the "eye-to-eye confrontation" that is at the origin of tragedy occurs between the persecutor and persecuted;[29] (2) the encounter with the victim's tragedy capacitates the ability to decide and respond;[30] (3) personal freedom renders an objective possibility of preventing a reenactment of the same (persecution of God for Balthasar; persecution of human persons for Sobrino);[31] (4) the movement toward actualizing this possibility constitutes a new disposition, a conversion;[32] and finally, (5) the other side of this conversion is entry into a new and genuine community.[33] In short, only the face-to-face encounter with tragedy provokes repentance, and without repentance there is no salvation. Tragedy brings about salvation only to the extent that conversion brings an end to tragedy.

As with the location of tragedy, Balthasar and Sobrino differ with respect to the location of the face-to-face encounter due to the fact that each configures the soteriological parameters of his respective theology in different ways. Sobrino explicitly employs what he calls a method of historicization while Balthasar applies what can be called a method of "eschatologization." Tragedy, Christology, and soteriology are conjugated differently based on these two methodological options, resulting in a displacement, not an abrogation, of either tragedy or salvation with respect to Jesus' crucifixion. Thus displaced, a resettlement is necessary, but one that maintains conversion as the salvific response to tragedy.

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28 *TD 1*: 432.

29 *TD 1*: 432; *TD 5*: 363-64, 367; Sobrino, *Where Is God?*, 7, 12-17.

30 *TD 5*: 365; Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 16.

31 *TD 5*: 367; Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 49-57.

32 *TD 5*: 368; Sobrino, *Where is God?*, xxvii.

33 *TD 5*: 364; Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 6, 91-98; Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 144-72.

How does Balthasar negotiate the resettlement of tragedy in a thoroughly eschatologized fashion? Above I indicated that it "appears" Balthasar does not show adequate appreciation for the tragedy of Jesus' cross for Jesus himself. However, if a) sin is fundamentally "resistance" to communion with God and not also fundamentally resistance to human fellowship;[34] and if b) during the purgatorial process the resistant sinner is in solitary confinement, with God alone as his "mirror";[35] then, it follows that the purgatorial "fire" is both a condemnatory accusation and an earnest question: "Why do you insist that I forsake you?" which, from the theocentric perspective of Balthasar's Trinitarian eschatology, is effectively synonymous with the question: "Why do you [continue to] persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). Therefore, it seems that a theodramatic tragedy is avoided only to the extent that each individual sinner undergoes an eschatological conversion in the face of the tragic situation he or she is causing for God. But since, in the purgatorial process, the "world-time" in which sin "happens" is discarded, "all human works are now concentrated on the Lord: 'Whatever you did—or did not do—to one of these, you did it—or did not do it—to me' (Mt 25:40, 45)."[36] Jesus' words, for Balthasar, do not indicate a radical presence among the poor who exist in real, "horizontal" "world-time." Rather, a new eschatological "vertical" temporality occurs in which the penitent is face-to-face with the Lord and "The [purgatorial] pains involved point directly to his Cross, and from them I [the penitent] read off his sufferings."[37]

I want to suggest that precisely at this moment Jesus' cross becomes tragic, though only to the extent that the historical crucifixion becomes eschatologized. The functionalized historical crucifixion once again gains its meaninglessness! For, according to Balthasar, resistance toward God is not futile; the human person can resist for an eternity. But resistance toward a God who has done everything for humanity is meaningless; it is a meaningless act. And this meaninglessness is shown forth in the eschatological presentation of the face of Jesus' cross, when the penitent comes to

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34 *TD 5*: 55.

35 *TD 5*: 364.

36 *TD 5*: 363-64.

37 *TD 5*: 367.

realize with increasing clarity that "What is important is not how I love the Lord but 'how he wishes to be loved.'"[38] If I am right, then Balthasar performatively sustains the historical meaninglessness of Jesus' cross. Of further significance is the fact that Balthasar achieves the rehabilitation of the staurological tragedy by acknowledging in purgatorial time the *mysterium inequitatis* that is subtly displaced by the law of the "ever-intensifying No to the Yes uttered by God in Christ,"[39] a law which seems to predominate and predetermine the divine-human response in the "horizontal" time of Balthasar's theology.[40] For it is only genuine human freedom that renders the crucifixion—even an eschatological "crucifixion" imminently tied to the Triune life of God—evitable and thus tragic.

As noted above, Sobrino seems to intimate that salvation does not occur once and for all on Jesus' cross. He shies away from asserting or theorizing a cosmic or ontological purgation of sins. Accordingly, atonement is depicted as an ongoing affair: it occurs in history and it can fail to be actualized.[41] Since, however, historicization indicates a dyadic, not a dualistic, reality—a complex and ambiguous created order that is indissolubly united with God without being ontologically identical to God—Sobrino is able to negotiate a resettlement of a cruciform salvation through the elucidation of multiple salvific disclosures that occur in direct reference to Jesus' historical crucifixion.

Historicization demands a simultaneous reading of events with respect to both the divine "vertical" and the historical "horizontal" dimensions. In relation to the divine, there is, first, the salvation Jesus renders on the cross as the exemplary accomplishment of a life of faithfulness and mercy, a life of love carried out to the end, which constitutes the disclosure of a life pleasing to God. Then, more mysteriously and visible only through the eyes of faith, there is the salvation Jesus brings on the cross as the locus

38 *TD* 5: 365.

39 *TD* 5: 22.

40 *TD* 5: 285.

41 On this point, Sobrino seems to stands in stark contrast to other liberation theologians, especially Juan Louis Segundo, who emphatically maintain the necessity of speaking of eschatological reconciliation and its relationship to the reconciliation that the Christian is commissioned to effect in history. See Segundo's "Conversion and Reconciliation in the Perspective of Modern Liberation Theology" in, *Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections*, trans. Robert R. Barr, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993).

of the expression of God's unrestrained love for humanity.[42] In relation to the "horizontal" dimension, Sobrino links the crucifixion with Jesus' "past" struggles and his "future" persecutions. With regard to the past, Jesus' death cannot be severed from the historical salvation Jesus brings in his ministry, understood as an active struggle against the anti-kingdom; the tragedy of the crucifixion is the culmination of Jesus' commitment to the kingdom of God. With regard to the future of Jesus' tragedy, Sobrino maintains that the body of Christ has a continuing presence in history precisely in the masses of bodies subject to the daily, but in no way necessary, tragedies brought about by indifference, as well as a sinful and scandalous lack of compassion. For Sobrino, the face of tragedy that elicits a salvific conversion must be both Christ's face and a historical, visible face at the same time. He enjoins his readers to recognize that "Mysteriously, [Jesus of Nazareth] is also in all the victims that the empire produces—and that we all produce."[43] Without this recognition of evitable tragedy in history, there can be no historical salvation, no manifestation of the kingdom among us.

V. CONCLUSION

What may we conclude from this expositive juxtaposition? First, neither Balthasar nor Sobrino present a thoroughly "traditional" view of salvation. While it may appear that only Sobrino relocates the traditional salvific reconciliation of Jesus' cross, Balthasar, while maintaining various traditional theologoumena, reconfigures them in such a way that he produces a novel atonement theory that relocates Jesus' salvific action from Good Friday to Holy Saturday. The cross does not itself reconcile humanity with God; rather, it becomes the means whereby Jesus may go into Hell in order to heal the breach between God and God's creation. For Sobrino, Jesus is the

42 Sobrino uses the expression "symbolic causality" to speak of this mode of divine salvation. However, the Heideggerian locution "manifestation of truth" seems a more adequate way of naming the salvific phenomenon Sobrino describes. Cyril O'Regan distinguishes between Heidegger's phainesthetics of beauty and Balthasar's phainesthetics of glory. See "Von Balthasar's Valorization and Critique of Heidegger's Genealogy of Modernity" in *Christian Spirituality and the Culture of Modernity*, ed. Peter J. Casarella and George P. Schner, S.J. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Alongside these two, we might place Sobrino's phainesthetics of compassion.

43 Sobrino, *Where is God?*, xxi.

"perennial sacrament in this world of a liberator God"[44] and the poor, the victims of history, are sacraments of Christ—a patristic theologoumenal "source" to which Balthasar conspicuously does not "return." This means that instead of displacing the salvific moment of Jesus' cross to Hell, Sobrino displaces it to history, a move that oddly enough brings Sobrino and Balthasar into an unexpected proximity. For Balthasar's eschatological collapse of horizontal and vertical time into purgatorial time bears an isomorphic relation to the socio-theological view of the created world in Sobrino's historicization. Furthermore, it is the displacements of eschatologization and historicization that allow both Sobrino and Balthasar to maintain the tragedy of the cross for Jesus himself in a way that previous soteriologies did not. In this regard, their Christologies share a commonality that may open space for future dialogue concerning Jesus' tragic crucifixion, the tragic death of innocent victims, and the pain of God.

44 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 273.

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Jon Sobrino's Theology of the Cross and the Meaning of Unjust Suffering

NATHAN D. HIEB

In light of the overwhelming scale and systematic nature of various twentieth century atrocities, many philosophers and theologians regard with suspicion any attempt to assign meaning to human suffering. Such thinkers often acknowledge the profundity intrinsic to all experiences of suffering, the sacred differences in how individuals respond to affliction, and the incommunicable nature of severe trauma and loss. Such recognition grants proper respect to human suffering by affirming its incomprehensibility and by resisting any attempt to offer rational explanation or justification. For example, Emmanuel Levinas argues that the twentieth century, which "in thirty years has known two world wars, the totalitarianisms of right and left, Hitlerism and Stalinism, Hiroshima, the Gulag, and the genocides of Auschwitz and Cambodia,"[1] provides grounds for the rejection of all arguments that appeal to God or "a metaphysical order"[2] from which meaning may be derived "to make sufferings here below comprehensible."[3] Levinas poignantly declares that all such "supra-sensible perspectives" are mistaken, that suffering is "essentially gratuitous and absurd,"[4] and that the Jewish Holocaust, which for Levinas is paradigmatic of the unjustifiable character of human suffering, confirms Nietzsche's claim regarding the death of God as "a quasi-empirical fact."[5] In spite of his strong assertion regarding the meaninglessness of suffering, however, Levinas argues that an ethical responsibility arises when one encounters the "useless suffering" of "the other" which compels attentive-

1 Emmanuel Levinas, "Useless Suffering," in *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 97.

2 Levinas, "Useless Suffering," 95.

3 Levinas, "Useless Suffering," 96.

4 Levinas, "Useless Suffering," 96.

5 Levinas, "Useless Suffering," 97.

ness towards this affliction and which elicits a response of compassion and love.[6] In this encounter with the other, one experiences "the just suffering in [oneself] for the unjustifiable suffering of the other," which is what Levinas calls "the suffering of suffering."[7] To this degree and in this carefully qualified sense, Levinas assigns limited meaning to human suffering when it is experienced in response to the affliction of others and leads to "the ethical perspective of the inter-human."[8]

Jon Sobrino's theological interpretation of the cross similarly seeks to assign limited and carefully qualified meaning to innocent suffering in Latin America without validating or rationally justifying the injustices that cause this distress. As a Christian theologian, Sobrino draws upon different resources than Levinas, but like Levinas is remarkably non-metaphysical in his account of historical soteriology. After setting the stage for this investigation by explaining the relevant ways that meaning may be assigned to an event, I will argue that Sobrino in *Jesus the Liberator*[9] attempts to indirectly assign partial meaning to suffering by articulating the significance of Christ's cross in historical and existential terms alone, by positing a strong connection between Christ and those who suffer unjustly today, and by depicting the "crucified peoples"[10] as the transmitters of historical salvation.

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6 Levinas, "Useless Suffering," 94, 100.

7 Levinas, "Useless Suffering," 94.

8 Levinas, "Useless Suffering," 94; see also 98, 100-101. Levinas is clear that the useless suffering of the other never becomes meaningful in and of itself and may never be justified. Meaningful suffering is limited to the one who observes the other's suffering and recognizes her ethical obligation to respond with compassion.

9 Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993). Sobrino describes this volume as "a more systematic development, with additions and corrections," compared to his previous writing on the cross from a Latin American liberation perspective (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 275, n14). See also Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987); Jon Sobrino, "Jesús de Nazaret," *Conceptos fundamentals de pastoral*, eds. C. Floristán and J. Tamayo, (Madrid, 1983), 480-513. Since this examination of Sobrino's theology is limited to his view of the cross, other important aspects of Sobrino's Christology such as the Kingdom of God, Christ's faith and prayer, and Christ's resurrection will not be set forth here. For more on these aspects of Sobrino's theology, see Donald E. Waltermire, *The Liberation Christologies of Leonardo Boff and Jon Sobrino: Latin American Contributions to Contemporary Christology* (New York: University Press of America, 1994), 57-73.

10 Sobrino follows Ellacuría by defining the "crucified peoples" as those in the two-thirds world who die prematurely as a result of the poverty and violence "inflicted by unjust

I. MEANING AND SUFFERING

Meaning is the conceptual content assigned to an event by an interpreting community. Through the assignment of this content, the interpreting community decides what a particular event signifies and thereby integrates it within the community's previously constructed set of meaningful events. The event then functions as a unit of the community's vocabulary, a part of its total set of symbols and assigned meanings, which the community employs to process the world around it and to interpret new experiences. Meanings assigned to past events, therefore, exert a strong determinative influence over the meanings assigned to similar events in the present without precluding the possibility that radically new interpretations of events in the present may lead to the reconsideration of a past event and to the substantial revision of its meaning. In this way, a community interprets its present in light of its past and may reinterpret its past in light of its present.

Meaning may be exhaustive or partial depending on whether it attempts to provide a comprehensive or a limited interpretation of the event to which it is assigned. John Calvin, for example, argues that every event in human history transpires according to God's will and that God uses even the most tragic experiences to achieve God's good purposes. In this way, Calvin assigns exhaustive meaning to instances of human suffering by offering a comprehensive framework within which the entire weight and potential significance of these events may be located, interpreted, and rationally explained. In short, for Calvin there is no troubling remainder that extends beyond the scope of his explanatory field; there is no senseless or meaningless suffering.[11] By contrast, Emmanuel Levinas assigns only partial, limited meaning to human suffering for he regards it as meaningful only to the extent that it is suffering for the other and that it generates an ethical demand.

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structures" (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 254-255). See also David A. Brondos, *Fortress Introduction to Salvation and the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 164.

11 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). Calvin believes that the doctrine of divine providence provides the exhaustive explanatory framework within which instances of human suffering may be interpreted.

In addition to being either exhaustive or partial, meaning may be assigned directly or indirectly. Meaning directly assigned entails definitional explanation, identification, and the precise correspondence of an event to its interpretation. An enthusiastic handshake, for example, in certain cultures may directly signify the joy of two friends who meet after a long separation. On the other hand, meaning may be indirectly assigned to an enigmatic event that resists all direct interpretation. This occurs when such an event is reframed by a larger conceptual range or narrative of meaningful events whose proximity and relation to the enigmatic event provide a limited degree of illumination and understanding. All meanings assigned to this enigmatic event are then mediated through its partial integration within a larger story. Such an event is not assigned exhaustive but only partial meaning, for its total weight and potential significance cannot be encompassed by the other meaningful events in the conceptual range or narrative within which it is placed. Traumatic events, for example, sometimes surpass the capacities of human cognition and conceptual formulation by transcending reference to previous, non-traumatic events. As such, they resist comparison to non-traumatic events as well as the direct assignment of meanings derived from "ordinary" events. Even so, the activity of conceptually reframing trauma within a larger narrative that grants the traumatic experience partial, indirectly assigned meaning has proven indispensible to the healing process of many trauma survivors.[12]

In his theology of the cross, Sobrino indirectly assigns partial meaning to experiences of suffering, which are otherwise incomprehensible. Interpreting Sobrino in this way sheds light on apparently contradictory statements found in *Jesus the Liberator*. For example, on the one hand Sobrino follows Leonardo Boff by arguing that the unjust suffering of the innocent "has no meaning in itself" and that ". . . nothing can confer meaning on

12 James Boehnlein explains, drawing upon 20 years of work with trauma survivors, "Regardless of cultural, ethnic, or religious background, a common characteristic that I have noted in working with these very diverse populations is that most individuals are continually searching for meaning both for their traumatic experiences and for their future. This is often mediated through a religious or spiritual belief system" (James K. Boehnlein, "Religion and Spirituality After Trauma," in *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad [New York: Cambridge University, 2007], 260).

the fact of the death of innocent victims. . . ."[13] On the other hand, he repeatedly asserts that innocent suffering can bear salvific, liberative power and therefore may be meaningful to a degree.[14] In my reading, the former statements should be interpreted as Sobrino's opposition to the direct assignment of exhaustive meaning to suffering through rational explanation or justification. The latter statements, however, should be viewed as consistent with one of the central aims of his theology of the cross, namely, the indirect assignment of partial meaning to unjust suffering through its incorporation within the Christian narrative. Tracing the manner in which Sobrino does so is the task of this essay.

II. SOBRINO ON CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND DEATH

Sobrino seeks to reframe contemporary suffering[15] in Latin America by identifying the unjust suffering of the poor with the suffering of Christ on the cross. In order to do this, Sobrino attempts to counter-balance what he regards as a gnostic and docetic tendency in much of theology by starting his Christological reflection with the "historical element (Jesus)" rather than the "transcendental element (Christ)."[16] Sobrino claims, " . . . [I]n its origins, the main difficulty for faith in Christ lay not in affirming his transcendence, but in affirming his specific human reality."[17] To overcome this tendency, he emphasizes the "practice" of Christ, regarding it as "the most historical aspect of the historical Jesus," and claims

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13 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 240-241.

14 For example, Sobrino claims that Jesus' suffering and death are meaningful and must be interpreted in light of his life of love (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 200-210, 219-222).

15 Stålsett believes that there are two specific types of suffering that Sobrino is dealing with: "suffering stemming from *poverty*" and "*violent* suffering," which may include "persecution, repression, oppression, war crimes massacres" (Sturla J. Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified: A Study in the Liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino*, ed. Richard Friedli et al.; vol. 127 of Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity [New York: Peter Lang, 2003], 496-497).

16 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 36-38, 40. Nicolson believes that for Sobrino, the "historical Jesus . . . is to be interpreted through praxis, i.e., how that historical Jesus can affect our battle for liberation now" (R.B. Nicolson, "Abelard Resurrected: Soteriology, praxis and duty," *JTSA* 56 [1986]: 36).

17 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 39.

that Christ's practice and "the spirit with which he carried it out"[18] illumine Christ's transcendent significance.[19] What emerges is a focus upon Christ's liberative actions in service to the Kingdom of God,[20] rather than upon the incarnation as the ground of Christ's redemptive work.[21] As a result, the cross is viewed primarily as a symbol of liberation from suffering and of God's solidarity with the victims of history.

By interpreting the cross as a symbol of existential and sociopolitical liberation, Sobrino self-consciously distances himself from classical theories of atonement that emphasize the spiritual and eternal implications of reconciliation with God. Sobrino argues that traditional versions of the doctrine of atonement were constructed in order to explain the way that "Jesus' cross brings salvation" but they fail at this task by obscuring rather than illuminating what the cross actually represents, which is God's saving love.[22] Further, these theories miss the "scandalous" nature of the cross through a false domestication that renders the unthinkable sacrifice of God's Son as a sensible, rationally justifiable event.[23] David Brondos writes, "Like other liberation theologians . . . Sobrino regards many of the traditional interpretations of Jesus' death as problematic, particularly in that they tend to regard suffering as redemptive and to isolate Jesus' death from his life."[24] Sobrino's emphasis upon the existential conditions of Christ's life and death, and their commonality with the lives and deaths

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18 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 51. Sobrino states, "By 'practice' I mean the whole range of activities Jesus used to act on social reality and transform it in the specific direction of the Kingdom of God."

19 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 39-40.

20 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 67-70.

21 Sobrino does indeed speak of "incarnation" but defines it as solidarity with the suffering poor through entrance into the conditions of their suffering. For this reason, Sobrino regards the Archbishop Romero's refusal to accept any protection not offered to the masses as an example of incarnation (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 245). However, entrance into another person's condition of suffering is not conceptually equivalent to God becoming human, and I do not find sufficient evidence in *Jesus the Liberator* to affirm Harold Wells' claim that Sobrino's statements concerning the incarnation reveal a Trinitarian theology in the Nicene sense (Harold Wells, "Theology of the Cross and the Theologies of Liberation," *TJT* 17 [2001]: 159).

22 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 223, 227-228. See also Magalhães, *Christologie und Nachfolge*, 97. Magalhães, 97; Bedford, *Jesus Christus und das gekreuzigte Volk*, 147.

23 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 223.

24 Brondos, *Salvation and the Cross*, 163.

of the crucified people, cannot be separated from Sobrino's construal of Christ's personhood in strongly Antiochian terms.[25]

As part of his effort to provide an alternative to classical atonement theories, Sobrino reinterprets the traditional claim that Christ's death expiates (i.e. removes) human sin.[26] He argues that "the historical Jesus," which is the norm of Sobrino's soteriological construction, "did not interpret his death in terms of salvation, in terms of the soteriological models later developed by the New Testament, such as expiatory sacrifice or vicarious satisfaction. . . ."[27] For Sobrino, Jesus death did not expiate human sin because, quite simply, Jesus did not bear the sins of every person in the world throughout all of history. Christ's bearing of sin is limited because "the masses" did not join in the persecution and death of Jesus; rather, his death was brought about by the religious and political elites of his day who were threatened by his attack upon their religious and sociopolitical structures of domination.[28] Jesus indeed bore sin, but he bore the sin of the specific individuals who persecuted him by suffering the harm directly inflicted upon him by their sinful actions.[29] In doing so, Jesus reveals a response to injustice that Sobrino regards as the key to overcoming oppression:

> [A]s to what should be done about sin, another fundamental question in the New Testament, the answer is clear, eradicate it, but with one essential condition: by bearing it. And rather than taking on the guilt of sin, bearing the sin of others means bearing the sin's historical effects: being ground down, crushed, put to death.[30]

According to Sobrino, Christ bore the sins of the people who directly caused his suffering and death and he bore these sins in the same way that humans always bear the sins of others, that is, by experiencing the pain and

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25 Peter Lüning, *Der Mensch im Angesicht des Gekreuzigten: Untersuchungen zum Kreuzesverständnis von Erich Przywara, Karl Rahner, Jon Sobrino und Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Harald Wagner, vol. 65 of Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2007), 255.

26 Sobrino also reinterprets scriptural references to blood or forensic imagery in liberationist terms (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 227-228).

27 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 201.

28 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 200.

29 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 246; see also 226.

30 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 260; see also 217.

destruction caused by their specific sinful actions.[31] Such a move precludes the assertion that Christ bore the entirety of human sin due to its immanent focus upon directly empirical, historically bound causal processes. Sobrino does not assign eternal significance to Christ's cross[32] but rather limits the effect of both Christ's suffering and death, as well as its positive relevance to humanity, to the realm of observable historical events.[33] In this way, Sobrino focuses upon the social impact of Christ's actions and regards this impact as a "history" and a "reality" which is passed down to us through the naturalized means of historical transmission and in which we participate "as a continuation of his practice."[34] Sobrino's thought at this point bears striking resemblance to Friedrich Schleiermacher's view of Christ's "passive suffering"[35] and of the transmission of faith via historical means.[36]

At this point a very close connection, if not direct identification, begins to emerge between sin and victimization in Sobrino's theology. He writes, "Sin is above all what causes death, what produces victims as real and visible as the Servant. Sin is what caused the death of Jesus and sin is what continues to cause the death of the crucified people. The invisible wrong

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31 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 156-157.

32 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 201.

33 Harold Wells offers a differing interpretation. He argues that Sobrino "affirms unambiguously that in Jesus, 'God is crucified.' Sobrino's soteriology . . . is Trinitarian" (Wells, "Theology of the Cross and the Theologies of Liberation," 159). The section of Sobrino's *Jesus the Liberator* from which Well is here quoting is more ambiguous than Wells suggests, however. Sobrino writes, " . . . God suffered on Jesus' cross and on those of this world's victims by being the non-active and silent witness" (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 244). Rather than revealing Sobrino's Trinitarianism, as Wells suggests, this passage argues that "God is involved in the passion of Jesus and the passion of the world," without attempting to explain this involvement in detail (244). Sobrino writes further, " . . . it is a secondary matter how we describe God's suffering" (244). When these passages are read in conjunction with others in which Sobrino argues that the crosses of suffering people today carry the same salvific efficacy as Christ's cross, it becomes evident that there is a high level of ambiguity in Sobrino's doctrine of God in *Jesus the Liberator* and that it is by no means obvious from this text alone that he affirms Nicene Trinitarianism.

34 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 51. See Waltermire, *Liberation Christologies*, 69. The naturalization of these means of transmission is evidenced by Christ's salvific role as an example that Christians emulate.

35 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (New York: T&T Clark, 1999), 457-460.

36 Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 426-427.

done to God becomes historical in the visible wrong done to the victims."[37] Notably, sin still retains the status of a "wrong done to God," but this is an "invisible" wrong which is expressed visibly as victimization. On the cross, "even the Son of God became a victim of the sin of this world."[38] Indeed, the cross is inseparable from victimization: "To die crucified does not mean simply to die but to be put to death. So 'cross' means that there are victims and there are executioners. . . ."[39] Stålsett goes so far as to argue that Sobrino's discourse of victimization constitutes the "bedrock, the fundamental concern and nerve-centre in Sobrino's Christology."[40] Stålsett believes that the category of "the victim" has grown in significance for Sobrino in his later writings and that it has even begun to take the place of "the poor" as the central focus of his thought.[41] Stålsett writes, "When I submit that Sobrino's theology—as liberation theology in general—opts for a 'victimological perspective' or has a 'victimological orientation', I refer to his claim that the fundamental theological questions—questions of God, of Jesus, of salvation and liberation—can existentially best and most appropriately be posed from the perspective of victims. "[42] This emphasis in Sobrino's thought must be seen in light of his larger attempt to distance himself from the traditional discussion of atonement for sin and to reconstrue the function of theology in terms of the alleviation of unjust human suffering. Such a revision radically shifts attention away from sinners in need of salvation from spiritual bondage to victims in need of liberation from historical forms of oppression.

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37 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 260.

38 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 233. Sobrino's reference to Christ as the "Son of God," as well as his discussion of how suffering affects God, is in tension with his discussion of the cross in strictly existential terms throughout the rest of this section (233, 242-52).

39 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 255.

40 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 299.

41 Of this replacement in Sobrino's thought, Stålsett writes, "This may be a result of the heightened awareness of the variety of oppressive relations and situations, which would render the term 'poor'—at least the way it is commonly understood—too one-dimensional. Or this replacement may simply be seen as a result of a certain exhaustion of the term 'poor' and its potential in liberation theology. Whatever the reason, this shift in terminology is noteworthy" (Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 300).

42 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 301. In spite of his emphasis upon "the victim," Stålsett notes that "Sobrino has not given any clear definition of 'victim', nor has he discussed its implications" (300).

Sobrino's conception of salvation as fundamentally historical finds clearest expression in his arguments concerning the revelatory function of Christ's cross.[43] Sobrino writes, "[The cross] is not efficient causality, but symbolic causality. Jesus' life and cross are that in which God's love for human beings is expressed and becomes as real as possible."[44] In this way, he limits the power of the cross to the symbolic level as an inspirational and exemplary model that does not effect a reconciling change between humanity and God.[45] According to Sobrino, "the New Testament does not say that Jesus' life and cross were necessary to change God's attitude to human beings, to make him change from being a justly angry God to a duly appeased God."[46] Salvation is not, then, a transcendent event between God and humanity with eternal ramifications. Rather, salvation is an experience of God's love revealed on the cross.[47] Sobrino argues, "Jesus' cross saves because in it the love of God for human beings has appeared with maximum clarity."[48] Christ's death on the cross is significant because it is the ultimate expression of the kind of life that is pleasing to God, which is "a life of love to the end."[49] For this reason, Christ's death must be interpreted in light of Christ's life[50] and together Christ's life and death reveal the love that we may emulate. Sobrino writes, "The very fact that true humanity has been revealed [in Christ] . . . is in itself good news and therefore is already in itself salvation: we human beings now know what we are. . . . And since the central core of this true humanity is Jesus' great love for human beings, we can assert that love exists . . . we are also enfolded in

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43 Brondos, *Salvation and the Cross*, 158, 164; Nicolson, "Abelard Resurrected," 42.

44 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 230; See also Brondos, *Salvation and the Cross*, 163.

45 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 203-204.

46 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 230.

47 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*,, 231. See Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 155-157.

48 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 232.

49 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 228.

50 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 200-204, 209-210.

love."[51] Accordingly, historical salvation consists of Christ's revelation to us of God's love and the manner of life that this love inspires.[52]

How, then, does the cross free humans from suffering? In Sobrino's words, "What good, if any, is there in Jesus' cross . . . ?"[53] To understand Sobrino properly at this point we must keep in mind his interest in describing salvation in existential and historical terms. We would err if we read him as positing a supernatural causal mechanism in which Christ's death effects liberation for humanity in all times and places; such a reading would assign as much transcendent, supra-historical value to Christ's death as the traditional atonement theories he wishes to avoid. The ability of Christ's death to effect liberation is inseparably connected to Sobrino's understanding of Christ's death as a willing act of service, a theme we will revisit later in this essay. Sobrino argues, "Jesus went to his death with confidence and saw it as a final act of service, more in the manner of an effective example that would motivate others than as a mechanism of salvation for others."[54] Christ's death was the corresponding outworking and conclusion of a life devoted to defend the "victims" of "an anti-Kingdom which brings death"; in this way "Jesus' death was not a mistake."[55] Stålsett elaborates: "So why was Jesus killed? Sobrino . . . sees the cross as a direct consequence of Jesus' life and mission. There was an intimate relationship between the way Jesus lived and the way he died."[56] The liberation brought by Christ's death is realized through the inspiration that motivates others to follow Christ's example by committing themselves to costly action for the liberation of the victims of this world.[57]

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51 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 229-230; see also 204.

52 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 259-260.

53 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 222.

54 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 204.

55 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 210; see also 230. Elsewhere, Sobrino writes, "The cross should not be seen as an arbitrary plan of God's or as a cruel punishment inflicted on Jesus, but as a consequence of God's original choice, incarnation, a radical drawing near for love and in love, wherever it leads, without escaping from history or manipulating it from outside" (244). See also Eileen M. Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization: Jon Sobrino's Christology and Ecclesiology in Dialogue* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1998), 132-133.

56 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 370.

57 Sobrino argues, "In Latin America it is a tangible fact that God's suffering has also been an idea that has encouraged liberation rather than resignation" (*Jesus the Liberator*, 246).

III. SOBRINO ON THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE

According to Sobrino, the role of the crucified people in spreading historical salvation is grounded in the commonality they share with Christ due to their similar experiences of suffering. Sobrino writes, "[Jesus] was killed—like so many people before and after him—because of his kind of life, because of what he said and what he did. In this sense there is nothing mysterious in Jesus' death, because it is a frequent occurrence."[58] Since many people are "also sons and daughters of God"[59] who have suffered horribly, Sobrino believes we should not regard Christ's experience on the cross as "a peculiar fate."[60] He thus construes Christ's cross as a representative instance of a larger class of nearly identical instances rather than as a unique event unrepeatable in its purpose or effect. Drawing upon Isaiah 53, Sobrino argues that the affliction of Yahweh's Servant is mirrored in the "hunger, sickness, slums, illiteracy, frustration through lack of education and employment, pain and suffering of all kinds" experienced by the crucified people in our world today.[61] Further, Christ suffered like many others as a result of resistance to the forces of oppression and in defense of the victims of injustice.[62] Because Christ's persecution arose as a consequence of his opposition to religious and sociopolitical domination, it prefigures the suffering of many present-day religious and political dissidents.[63] Sobrino poignantly writes: "This is the crucified people's reality. . . . They are suffering peoples and they suffer in a way that is like the horrors we are told are inflicted on the Servant [in Isaiah 53]. In their poverty and death they are like the Servant and at least in this—but this least is a maximum—they are also like Jesus crucified."[64] This commonality does not evacuate

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58 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 209; See also Brondos, *Salvation and the Cross*, 162.

59 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 209-210.

60 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 199.

61 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 256. Other similarities between the Suffering Servant and the crucified people include the experience of being despised and rejected, being forgotten in death, and being destroyed by injustice (257).

62 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 200.

63 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 205-206, 209.

64 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 258.

Christ's crucifixion of significance. Rather, Christ's death carries exemplary relevance for us today precisely because of this commonality. Indeed, the similarity between Christ's suffering and that of the crucified people in the Two Thirds World enables those who suffer today to recognize a deep bond between their lives and that of Christ. This recognition, then, enables them to realize that they stand where Christ once stood in suffering and oppression, and that they, like Christ, have a unique relationship to God. In this way, a dialectical process of interpretation unfolds in which Christ's cross is viewed in light of contemporary suffering and present-day oppression is understood in light of Christ's persecution.[65]

For Sobrino, the lives, sufferings, and deaths of the crucified people contain the hermeneutical key necessary for unlocking the meaning and significance of Christ's life, suffering, and death.[66] He writes, "The crucified peoples of the Third Word are today the great theological setting, the *locus*, in which to understand the cross of Jesus."[67] Stålsett points to "a clear historical *continuity*"[68] that exists in Sobrino's thought between Christ's death and the deaths of the crucified people. He argues that when Sobrino speaks of the "historical Jesus" he is referring to "this history as *seen from* and *continued in* the 'today' of Latin America."[69] As such, the Latin Ameri-

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65 Sobrino argues, ". . . [T]his place is the situation of the poor, which is ultimately an option whose justification is to be found only within the hermeneutical circle: from the standpoint of the poor we think we come to know Christ better, and it is this better-known Christ, we think, who points us to where the poor are." Later in this passage he also states, ". . . [I]n the world of poverty the poor and Jesus of Nazareth converge and point to each other" (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 35).

66 Stålsett believes that in Sobrino's thought the interpretation of "the historical Jesus is given priority over the contemporary images of Christ" and over present-day cultural realities that impinge upon the interpretation of the historical Christ (Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 195, 533). I do not find sufficient evidence in *Jesus the Liberator* to agree with this claim for the passages I cite in this essay indicate that Sobrino grants more weight to the experiences of the crucified people in his hermeneutical process than to the historical Jesus. Elsewhere, however, Stålsett concedes a mutual influence between the theological significance of Christ's crucifixion and of contemporary suffering (164, 92-93, 493, 533). Stålsett is correct in the following critique: "Even though [Sobrino] insists on the significance of the hermeneutical standpoint (praxis in the world of the poor) for the interpretation of the historical Jesus, he does admit the need for criteria in order to identify the historical Jesus. But the relationship between the criteria and the hermeneutical standpoint remains unclear in his outline" (210).

67 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 196; see also 195, 251.

68 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 163, italics original.

69 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 195, italics original.

can context provides the hermeneutical criteria that determines Sobrino's evaluation of the historical Jesus and the picture of Christ's life and ministry at the center of his thought.[70] In this unapologetically circular movement of interpretation,[71] contemporary crucified people interpret Christ's life and death according to their own struggles and thus regard Christ's cross as an exemplar and representative instance of the unjust suffering that marks their own lives. Christ's cross is then applied to their present day situation in order to elucidate the significance and salvific potential of their own unjust suffering. The crucified people begin to understand that they constitute, in the words of Stålsett, "an actual, i.e. historical, manifestation of the crucified body of Christ."[72] Therefore, Stålsett continues, "[A]nyone who looks for the manifestation of Christ in our time should look to this particular part of humanity, usually forgotten and disregarded."[73] Sobrino goes on to claim that the crucified people not only provide the hermeneutical lens for understanding the crucified Christ but that they, like Christ, bring about salvation in history.

IV. SOBRINO ON THE TRANSMISSION OF HISTORICAL SALVATION

Sobrino argues that people today are able to transmit liberative salvation to others by following Christ's example. Through lives of love they extend Christ's effectiveness by replicating his ministry through the continuation of the trajectory and form of his work.[74] Sobrino writes, "A credible love has the effect in history that others carry on the cause that was expressed

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70 This is in spite of the fact that Sobrino refers to Christ as the *norma normans* by which contemporary life and practice should be judged (Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 195, n50). I agree with Stålsett's following assessment: "Once again, there seems to be an inescapable circularity in Sobrino's framework, a circularity which leads to a certain vagueness" (Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 195, see also 210).

71 Fagan, *An Interpretation of Evangelization*, 140, see also 89-92.

72 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 163.

73 Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*; 163. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 254, 264.

74 Therefore, discipleship is central to Sobrino's Christology (Bedford, *Jesus Christus und das gekreuzigte Volk*, 73-75, 83-90). Sobrino follows Tillich in regarding Jesus's significance as something bestowed upon him through his reception by others as the Messiah (*Jesus the Liberator*)26; See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology II: Existence and The Christ* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975], 98-101).

in that love. . . . The crucified God is not a phenomenon that can be approached through theoretical concepts, but through practical concepts; it is not a case for theo-logy but for theo-praxis. . . ."[75] As others carry on the work of liberation, they too will experience persecution and martyrdom which will in turn inspire others to engage in selfless, loving service in much the same way that Christ's suffering and death inspired them, leading to a long chain of liberative action that is motivated by preceding exemplars and that continually provides fresh exemplars for future generations. Sobrino argues:

> As often occurs in Latin America, in the presence of the martyrs, when human beings understand that there has been love, they understand it as good news, as something deeply humanizing. . . . They also understand it as an invitation to continue it. . . . On this principle, Jesus' cross as the culmination of his whole life can be understood as bringing salvation. This saving efficacy is shown more in the form of an exemplary cause than of an efficient cause. But this does not mean that it is not effective: there stands Jesus, faithful and merciful to the end, inviting and inspiring human beings to reproduce in their turn the homo verus, true humanity.76

Not only do martyrs effect salvation for others in the same way that Christ effects salvation, that is, through the revelation of true humanness displayed in lives of love,[77] but the experience of the martyrs, as we have seen, provides the hermeneutical perspective from which Christ's life and death are interpreted.[78] The direction of interpretation, according to this passage, moves from the present to the past, from contemporary Latin America to Jesus Christ.[79] After Christ's experience of suffering and death is interpreted according to the Latin American context, the example of Christ provides a model of what "true humanity" is within the Latin American context of violence and oppression and of how a life of love may transmit liberation to others.

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75 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 246.

76 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 230, italics added.

77 Brondos, *Salvation and the Cross*, 164.

78 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 35, 195-196, 251.

79 Sobrino's interpretation of Christ's experience in terms of the Latin American context is signaled by the key transitional phrase "*On this principle*" in the previous quotation.

Sobrino writes, "The crucial point is that Jesus says that his life is 'for,' 'on behalf of' (*hyper*) others, and that this produces positive fruits in others. It is an understanding of Jesus' life as service, and in the end sacrificial service."[80] Christians must emulate Christ's life of loving service by working for the salvific liberation of others which entails, as previously noted, the destruction of injustice by bearing the suffering that injustice inflicts upon those who oppose it.[81] In so doing, Christians follow Christ by bearing the sin of others in the same way that Christ bore sin,[82] by showing solidarity with those who suffer unjustly, and by combating the causes of unjust suffering.[83] The solidarity of Christians with those who suffer must entail efforts to liberate "the crucified" by seeking, "in a particular way, to bring them down from the cross."[84] Love for others and the liberation of the oppressed is inseparably united to the cross in Sobrino's theology.[85]

Here we see two categories of people who bear the cross in Sobrino's theology. First, Christ's cross is an example of a life of love lived for the sociopolitical liberation of those who suffer. As people seek to follow Christ's example by relieving the suffering of others they invariably encounter the opposition of persecution which is overcome by "bearing" it, i.e. by suffering it as Christ suffered on the cross. In Sobrino's words, "God lets Jesus die to communicate to us his plan for life."[86] Second, Sobrino construes the cross as a symbol of victimization and of God's "solidarity" with "victims" and "the crucified."[87] For him Isaiah 53 depicts the Suffering Servant as both those who engage in liberative action ("the active Suffering Servant") and those who are the victims of oppression ("the passive Suffering Servant"). While these two groups may

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80 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 203.

81 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 246.

82 Stålsett writes, "Sobrino claims that the crucified people in fact save/liberate their crucifiers by carrying (the real consequences of) their sins, and thereby, we might say, carrying their sins *away*. They become—through a scandalous paradox, Sobrino admits—bearers of 'historical soteriology' *in and through* their innocent sufferings" (Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 156-157, italics original).

83 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 244-246.

84 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 252.

85 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 228-230.

86 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 244.

87 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 244-245, 251-252.

not always be clearly differentiated, Sobrino distinguishing them in the following way:

> [I]nternalized oppression generates (or may generate) awareness and this generates organization for liberation, which can unite the masses—the passive Suffering Servant, from whom no one expects salvation—with their leaders and defenders, equivalent to the active Suffering Servant, who are usually considered as bringers of salvation . . . we can also state that the oppressed are their own agents of liberation.[88]

As Christians strive to emulate the crucified Christ by working to bring about the salvific liberation of others, they discover that the oppressed themselves, through their awareness of their own oppression and through their organization against it, are the unexpected agents of their own salvation. Therefore, Sobrino designates as "martyrs" both those who suffer persecution and die as a result of their work of liberation and those who are the historical victims of oppression.[89]

In this costly liberative action, those who carry on Christ's work in our present age bring multiple forms of salvation rather than the monistic salvation from sin envisioned by traditional soteriologies. Sobrino argues that traditional soteriological models artificially limit God's saving activity to atonement for sin and thereby fail to account for "the plural salvations brought by the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus."[90] Salvation as liberation is a broad concept that addresses the existential experience of humanity in a holistic manner. Sobrino writes, "The danger is that within this all-embracing salvation [expressed by traditional atonement models] the plurality of salvations brought about by Jesus of Nazareth is not made explicit: salvation from any sort of oppression, inner and outer, spiritual and physical, personal and social."[91] The plurality of salvations in Sobrino's thought arises necessarily from his belief that suffering humans are able to effect their own salvation as well as the salvation of others. If salvation is effected by Jesus Christ alone, then, although salvation may

88 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 259-260.

89 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 269-271. Sobrino argues that "the central criterion for martyrdom" should be "unjustly inflicted death for love's sake" (270). Sobrino claims that "the unprotected masses" who die unjustly are the "martyred people" because they represent Christ's suffering and death by analogy (271).

90 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 222.

91 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 222.

impinge upon multiple aspects of the human person and the plurality of social structures in a variety of ways, there will be a persistent, underlying unity within salvation due to its origin in the person and work of the one person, Jesus Christ. If, however, multiple humans throughout history effect salvation as liberation, then it follows that the salvation achieved will be diversified in a plurality of forms.[92]

Sobrino believes that the diverse forms of salvation transmitted by the crucified people are able to transform all others, even those not victimized by oppression. For example, he argues that the crucified people facilitate the conversion of others by bearing witness to the reality and victimizing power of sin and by issuing a call for repentance through their suffering: "If the crucified people are not able to turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, nothing can."[93] Sobrino also argues that the crucified people demonstrate moral values that witness to the power of their faith such as community, service, simplicity, creativity, and openness to transcendence.[94] Before a watching world, the crucified people exhibit hope in their work for liberation, love through their willingness to sacrifice their lives in martyrdom, and forgiveness towards their oppressors even in the midst of great suffering.[95] Because of their expression of these Christian values, "the crucified people offer a faith, a way of being church and a holiness that are more authentic, more Christian and more relevant to the present-day world, and that recapture more of Jesus."[96] As such, the activity of modeling a liberated life is extended from Christ to the crucified people and then from the crucified people to the rest of the world:

> The crucified people generate solidarity, mutual support between human beings and believers, openness to one another, giving the best of oneself to others and receiving their best in return. This solidarity—small in quantitative terms—is nevertheless real and new. It offers a

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92 The question of how the diverse forms of salvation maintain unity and commonality is left unanswered, though perhaps Sobrino could argue that such unity arises because these forms are each expressions of the love displayed by Christ.

93 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 262.

94 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 263.

95 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 263-264.

96 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 264; See Stålsett, *The crucified and the Crucified*, 157-161.

> small-scale model of human and Christian relationships between peoples and churches.[97]

Sobrino's depiction of salvation in existential and historical terms comes into sharpest focus at this point. He argues:

> [H]owever scandalous, if we do not accept the possibility that the crucified people bring salvation, it is pointless to repeat that the Servant and the crucified Christ bring salvation. If we do not make salvation historical in some way, it is pointless to repeat that the Servant and the crucified Christ bring real concrete salvation. Otherwise we would be reducing this to God's arbitrary will, which would be completely invisible and only known by him and quite unverifiable.[98]

Sobrino's attempt to bind the salvific efficacy of Christ to the salvific efficacy of the crucified people is the logical corollary of his construal of salvation in existential and historical terms. The dismissal of traditional atonement theories concerned with eternal salvation from sin results in the limitation of salvation to the boundaries of empirically discernable, historical processes. If, however, salvation is limited to the sphere of naturalized, physical existence, then the salvation offered by Christ is effective only within the existential boundaries of Christ's earthly existence and Christ's ability to inspire is limited to the naturalized transmission of his story within his historical sphere of influence. Christ's death and the deaths of the crucified people are then on an equal footing to the extent that they both exemplify costly, loving service to God as the manner of life most pleasing to God. As Christ's death effects salvation within Sobrino's model, so all instances of loving, sacrificial service contain the necessary preconditions for effecting salvation. Sobrino thereby maintains logical consistency with his soteriology as a whole when he inseparably links the salvific efficacy of Christ's life and death to the salvific efficacy of the lives and deaths of the crucified people:

> In this the crucified people certainly resemble the Suffering Servant. The crucified people bear the sins of their oppressors on their shoulders . . . . This load destroys them and they die like the Servant. . . . Nevertheless by really taking on the sin historically, the Servant can eradicate it.

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97 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 264. Later in this passage, Sobrino states, "like the lamb of God, [the crucified people] carry the sin of the world and by carrying it they offer light and salvation to all" (264).

98 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 262.

> It becomes light and salvation and the scandalous paradox is resolved. The crucified people become the bearers of "historical soteriology."[99]

As the culmination of his soteriology, we may now understand Sobrino's claim that victims invoke the presence of God because of the existential similarity of their experiences to that of Christ on the cross. Sobrino argues, "The victims of this world are the place where God is known, but sacramentally. They make God known because they make him present. As on Jesus' cross, in them 'the Godhead hides,' . . . but God is there."[100] As God was present during Christ's experience of the cross, so God is present to the crucified people as they suffer their own crucifixion. The experience of suffering borne by crucified people is in itself what interjects the presence of God within their suffering. Sobrino writes, "They make Christ present first and foremost through the bare fact of being passively on the cross. But they also make him present because, like the lamb of God, they carry the sin of the world. . . ."[101] Consistency with his historically and existentially bound portrayal of salvation set forth above and with his belief that Jesus' messianic significance rests upon his historical reception as the Christ[102] demands that the presence of Christ of which Sobrino speaks must be a symbolic rather than a supernatural manifestation of his being or activity.[103] Even so, Sobrino regards God's presence with crucified people as revelatory: "Knowledge of God always has a material setting, and the place where the crucified God is known is the crosses of this world. . . ."[104] As the Eucharistic bread and wine are the sacraments of God's presence, the victims of the world are in themselves the sacramental presence of "the crucified God." Through the world's victims, we know God. The epistemic process regarding our knowledge of God is therefore as inseparably tied to the experiences of the crucified people for Sobrino as his interpretation

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99 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 260-261.

100 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 251.

101 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 264.

102 Sobrino writes, "If, *per impossibile*, there was, in fact, no real faith in Christ in history, Christ would cease to be Christ" (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 26). See Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 98-101.

103 This symbolic presence of God in the current suffering of crucified people may be construed as similar to the "symbolic causality" by which Christ's death is a salvific expression of God's love (Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 230).

104 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 251.

of the significance of Christ's cross. Our knowledge of God and our interpretation of Christ's cross are each shaped by, and to a degree determined by, contemporary experiences of suffering. Sobrino poignantly states: "To stand at the foot of Jesus' cross and to stand at the foot of historical crosses is absolutely necessary if we want to know the crucified God."[105]

V. CONCLUSION

We have seen that Jon Sobrino construes the significance of Christ's cross in historical and existential terms while positing a strong connection between Christ and the contemporary victims of injustice in Latin America, whom he portrays as the bearers of historical salvation. In this way, Sobrino's presentation of the cross manages to indirectly assign partial meaning to the affliction of the crucified people through the mediation of the Christian story. Current human suffering, therefore, becomes meaningful for Sobrino when viewed in relation to Christ's suffering without receiving direct validation or rational justification, and this meaning extends no further than suffering's instrumental contribution to the elimination of further suffering and to the liberation of the crucified people. Though Sobrino carefully qualifies the meaning he attaches to suffering, this meaning is not insignificant. The indirect assignment of partial meaning to suffering by Sobrino provides a model of how otherwise senseless suffering may be rendered meaningful to a small degree when it inspires oppressed people to seek liberation through Christ's example of love, motivates ethical action on behalf of the "other" in need, and thereby contributes to the reduction of unjust suffering throughout our world.

105 Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 251.

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Proclaiming Jesus in a Strange Land: Possibilities and Limits of an Asian Christology

SUNG-SUP KIM

Is there such a thing as an Asian Christology? If so, what is it like? These are the questions that demand our attention here. The questions raise another question because the definition of "Asian" is far from clear. When we think about it, what distinguishes Asia is the lack of unifying marks; its sheer diversity is mind-boggling. Geographically speaking, the Asian continent is a vast mass of land composed of several subcontinents. Linguistically speaking, there are at least seven major language families, far more than in any other continent, which become innumerable when subdivided into actual living dialects. How can we characterize the land that encompasses the western end of Arabic-speaking peoples and the eastern end of Japanese islands? How can we define the continent that stretches from the northern end of Mongolian prairie to the southern end of Indian subcontinent? Even without citing Edward Said, it is difficult to erase the impression that perhaps the whole idea of the Orient or the East is an invention of the West.[1] Nevertheless, the increasing importance of Asian churches in the Christian world has provided a strong impetus for Christians in Asia to seek a common ground of identity and solidarity.

The Sri Lankan theologian Aloysius Pieris lifts up two characteristics of the Asian context that any serious Asian theology must take into account. He writes:

> Any discussion about Asian theology has to move between two poles: the Third Worldliness of our continent and its peculiarly Asian character. More realistically and precisely, the common denominator linking Asia with the Third World is its overwhelming poverty. The specific character defining Asia within the other poor countries is its multifaceted

1 See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

> religiousness. These two inseparable realities constitute in their interpenetration what might be designated as the Asian context, the matrix of any theology truly Asian.[2]

Seeking to identify and describe some ways to talk about Jesus Christ in the Asian context, I will focus on these two characteristics: the overwhelming poverty and the pervasive religiousness of Asia.[3] As the first example, I will introduce the theology of Byung-Mu Ahn (1922-1996) of South Korea, who reformulated Christology for the Korean people suffering under the military dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s. We will then take a look at the debate between two Japanese theologians/philosophers, Katsumi Takizawa (1909-1984) and Seiichi Yagi (b. 1932), whose struggle with Christology was firmly rooted in their Buddhist soil. My familiarity has inevitably turned my attention to these Northeast Asian theologians, but it is my hope that an analysis of their thoughts would provide a good overall picture of Asian Christology in particular and Asian theology in general.

I. BYUNG-MU AHN'S *MINJUNG* THEOLOGY

Ahn lived through the turmoil of twentieth-century Korean history. Born in Korea under the Japanese colonial rule in 1922, he went to Japan to study sociology. As World War II approached its end, however, he broke off his study and went underground in Manchuria in order to avoid the threat of being conscripted into the Japanese military. The joy of liberation following the end of the war, however, was short-lived. Korea was divided along the thirty-eighth parallel into American and Soviet territories, each of which soon set up its own government. The two states inevitably became embroiled in the bloody Korean War. Ahn had to flee his hometown in present-day North Korea from the persecution of the communists against Christians and settled in Seoul. There he encountered the writings of Rudolf Bultmann and decided to study theology. By the time Ahn went

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2 Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 69.

3 In addition to these two characteristics, Peter Phan, a Vietnamese-American theologian, mentions a third one as the presence of communist regimes. Although it is an interesting aspect, I choose not to discuss it in this essay because it is not as pervasive as the other two characteristics. Besides, Phan himself does not develop this aspect further in his discussion of Asian Christology. See Peter C. Phan, "Jesus the Christ with an Asian Face," *TS* 57 (1996), 399-430.

to Germany, Bultmann had already retired, so he went to Heidelberg to study with Bultmann's pupil Günther Bornkamm. This generation of New Testament scholars in Germany was turning its attention from the kerygmatic Christ to the historical Jesus, but Ahn felt that the Western theological paradigm "brought me nothing but agnosticism toward the historical Jesus."[4] He found himself unable to reconcile his academic agnosticism and his personal attachment to Christ.

When Ahn returned to Korea in the late 1960s, the tyranny of dictatorship was reaching its height. In the process of rapid industrialization, the military government sacrificed the poor and further alienated them. In the midst of the rising opposition movements of the *minjung*, or grassroots people of Korea, Ahn realized that the Western picture of Jesus gave no answer to the Korean people's own questions. He decided to revisit the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Mark.

Ahn's most famous work, *Jesus of Galilee*, is a result of such an effort.[5] The fundamental presupposition of this work is an undisguised polemic against Bultmann: "In the beginning there was the event, not the kerygma."[6] Ahn's quest for the historical Jesus, however, is not a search for an individual figure who lived two thousand years ago. The event underlying the kerygma was the Jesus movement that consisted not only of Jesus but also of the people surrounding him. Here Ahn makes a unique contribution to the interpretation of the Gospel of Mark. He observes how Mark uses the term *ochlos*, which in the Hellenistic-Jewish literature of the time had predominantly pejorative connotations, to denote a group of people playing a central role in his Gospel. These people, mostly from Galilee, were the poor and the oppressed, and in them Ahn discovers "a

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4 Byung-Mu Ahn, *Jesus of Galilee* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 2004), 2. For the biographical information, see Ahn, *Jesus of Galilee*, vii-5; Volker Küster, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 2001), 152-62.

5 Besides *Jesus of Galilee*, some other works available in English and German are: Ahn, "Jesus and People (Minjung)," in *Asian Faces of Jesus*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993),163-72; Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark," in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History* (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), 136-84; Ahn, *Draußen vor dem Tor: Kirche und Minjung in Korea—Theologische Beiträge und Reflexionen*, ed. Winfried Glüer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

6 Ahn, "The Transmitters of the Jesus-Event," *CTC Bulletin* 5-6 (1984-1985), 27.

reference group for a theological interpretation of the situation of the Korean Minjung."[7] Claiming *minjung* as an untranslatable term open to the suffering people of all times, Ahn reinterprets Mark's Gospel as the story of *minjung*.

According to Ahn's Christology, the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection can be properly understood only when they are seen as an answer to a question posed by the people. Therefore, Ahn traces the beginning of the Jesus movement to the history of the people's suffering under various oppressors. Jesus came as an answer to their outcry. Ahn argues that the people, or the *minjung,* are not a mere object of Jesus' mission. Nor are they a mere background against which Jesus reveals his identity. Ahn corrects the view of form criticism, which merely saw this group of people as a stylistic figure in the sense of the ancient "chorus" in Greek tragedies.[8] He observes that "[e]verywhere Jesus went, the *minjung* (*ochlos*) followed."[9] Jesus shared the same table with them. As fellow Galileans, Jesus and the *minjung* held a relationship of solidarity against the Jerusalem ruling class. In other words, Jesus and the *minjung* were in an inseparable relationship: "It would be impossible to envision Jesus of Galilee without the *minjung*, and likewise, it would be difficult to think about the *minjung* of the gospels without Jesus." In fact, Ahn radicalizes the relationship and goes as far as to reversing the order: "If you think you can never abandon the subject-object schemata, then reverse that schemata. That is, Jesus was nothing but a mirror that reflected the *minjung*!"[10]

This kind of statement has brought upon Ahn a charge that he identifies the *minjung* with Jesus Christ and thus, as it were, introduces a divinization of the *minjung*. This is a criticism which has often been made in a similar form against liberation theologians. Here, however, we must first ask the basic question: Who is identified with whom, or who identifies oneself with whom? Jesus identified himself with the suffering people.[11]

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7 Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 156.

8 Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 157.

9 Ahn, *Jesus of Galilee*, 122.

10 Ahn, *Jesus of Galilee*, 122.

11 "He identifies himself with the Minjung. He exists for no other than for the Minjung (cf. Mk 2:17)" (Ahn, "Jesus and People," 169).

Obeying Jesus' call to discipleship (following after), Ahn's theology suggests that we too should identify ourselves with them.

Although Ahn claims to be seeking the historical Jesus, the Jesus that he seeks is far from that of the modern Western notion. The historicity of Jesus is inextricably related to that of his people and further to the *minjung* both past and present. The division between historical Jesus and kerygmatic Christ is done away with in a way similar to the Christology in liberation theology.[12] The present Christ is discovered not only in the historical past but also among the *minjung* of our own time.[13] In Ahn's theology, "the text of the Gospel of Mark and the Korean context interpret each other reciprocally and are recognizable in each other."[14]

Up to this point, it seems clear that Ahn's *minjung* theology bears much resemblance to Latin American liberation theology. Evidence of direct influence, however, is less than clear. Ahn's cited sources are heavily German and mostly from New Testament scholarship. Perhaps the similarity of respective contexts has brought forth the similarity of ideas. As I read Ahn's writings, however, I sensed that underneath his concern for the liberation of his people was an even deeper concern. As will be shown below, this is the concern that Takizawa and Yagi also seem to share, and to that extent it is perhaps a fundamental concern of Asian Christology. The concern can be phrased as a question: How is God with us in Christ? Every Asian Christian at one point in his or her life has asked oneself, "Why has God not come to us earlier?" Reading between the lines is a feeling of inferiority and envy toward the Western world. Faced with the reality that the vast majority of Asian people still show no intention of confessing their faith in Christ, there is a fear that maybe we Asians have been abandoned

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12 Jon Sobrino warns us not to "forget that the Christ of faith is none other than Jesus of Nazareth" (Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, trans. John Drury [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978], 381). Liberation Christology calls for a return to the historical Jesus not merely for the purpose of historical investigation by which one may establish the possibility and rationality of belief in Jesus. Rather, the purpose is to recreate and reenact his practice in our own situation today. See Julio Lois, "Christology in the Theology of Liberation," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993): 168-94.

13 "[I]n the figure of the historical Jesus, and more concretely in his liberative practice or way of making history, we are invited to encounter him in preferential form in the face of the poor of the earth" (Lois, "Christology in the Theology of Liberation," 175).

14 Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 159.

by God. It is a godless fear that goes against our true faith, but no honest Asian Christian could deny its presence somewhere in his or her heart.

The feeling has an uncommonly strong presence in the Korean people because they have endured a particularly long history of suffering and desperation. For centuries they experienced the direct or indirect interference of the Chinese Empire. Then they suffered at the hands of the Japanese. Then they fought against one another in a war. As though that were not enough, the people then had to endure the rule of military dictatorship. The Koreans speak of *han* and claim that this, like the term *minjung*, cannot be translated. Nam-Dong Suh, another *minjung* theologian from South Korea, explains *han* in this way: "On the one hand, it is a dominant feeling of defeat, resignation, and nothingness. On the other, it is a feeling with a tenacity of will for life which comes to weaker beings."[15] It is my interpretation that with his *minjung* theology Ahn is trying to liberate the Korean people not only from the political oppression and the economic poverty but also the *han* of abandonment and resentment. He does this by telling them that Christ has already been with them in their suffering.

The sense of abandonment or the feeling of *han*, however, is something that not only the Korean people but also all human beings should find in themselves—not because God has abandoned us but because we have all forsaken God. *Minjung* theology teaches us to lower ourselves to the place of *minjung* because it was *minjung* and they alone who yearned for the coming of Jesus, and they alone could recognize him when he actually came. If this is the contribution of *minjung* theology, however, I suggest that it remain radical. It should resist the temptation of falling into an easy identification of the people with Christ, and it must combat the complacency of possessing Christ already with us.

Much has changed in South Korea since the height of *minjung* theology. The country has overcome the worst problems of poverty. The autocratic regime is no more, and the former opposition has had a chance to rule for the past decade. Due in no small part to Ahn and his colleagues' efforts, the situation of the people has improved significantly. To the degree that *minjung* theology is a contextual or context-bound theology, the question remains open whether it still has life in the changed context of Korea. It

15 Nam Dong Suh, "Towards a Theology of Han," in *Minjung Theology*, 54.

is not a question, however, that *minjung* are numerous in other parts of Asia, in fact right across South Korea's border to the north. As the living conditions have improved, however, the general public has lost much of its interest in the pleas of the suffering people. In fact, it is precisely in times of peace and prosperity that Ahn's urge to identify with *minjung* and to find Christ among them echoes most loudly.

II. THE THEOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN KATSUMI TAKIZAWA AND SEIICHI YAGI

Born in 1909 near Tokyo, Katsumi Takizawa went to study law at the University of Tokyo in 1927.[16] His legal studies did not satisfy him, for he was struck by profound existential questions. He switched to philosophy, but the study of philosophy, too, failed to satisfy him. It was only when he encountered the works of Kitaro Nishida that he found something to devote his mind to. Nishida was regarded "the patriarch of modern Japanese philosophy" and the founder of a distinctive school of thought commonly called the Kyoto school.[17] As a practicing Zen Buddhist, Nishida wanted to give expression, with the aid of Western and philosophical categories of thought, to the truth underlying his Zen experience. To call Nishida a "Zen philosopher," however, would involve a bit of "intrinsic contradiction" because the very purpose of Zen Buddhism is to overcome intellectual reflection and the resulting split between object and subject.[18] Notice here that this attempt to overcome the subject-object schemata was also Ahn's goal in his description of the relationship between Jesus and *minjung*.

Naturally Nishida's philosophy sounds paradoxical from the perspective of Western logic. His concept of "absolutely contradictory self-identity" defines the relationship between the individual and the universal or, to put it in theological terminology, between human beings and God. At the deepest level of human existence, already the human being is always

16 For the biographical information of Takizawa, see Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 92-98. Also, one can find a brief biographical note and a bibliography of works available in German in Katsumi Takizawa, *Reflexionen über die universale Grundlage von Buddhismus und Christentum* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter D. Lang, 1980), 180-86.

17 Ryosuke Ohashi, "Einführung," in *Die Philosophie der Kyoto-Schule: Texte und Einführung* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1990), 14.

18 Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 98.

identical with God. At the same time, the two should not be confused.[19] Takizawa finds a breakthrough in Nishida's ideas and defines the relationship between God and human beings as inseparable and unidentifiable. As Takizawa was preparing to study in Germany, he visited Nishida for a word of advice on with whom to study. Surprisingly the Buddhist philosopher recommended him to study with the theologian Karl Barth: "[Nishida] answered me: 'Today it is better with theologians than with philosophers, as the former are much more interesting than the latter. For the moment something necessary in truth, namely God, is lacking even in Heidegger. So for the best, go to Karl Barth, who is also the firmest among the theologians.'"[20]

Takizawa went to Bonn in 1933 and studied with Barth until the latter's expulsion from the university post in 1935.[21] According to his understanding of Barth's theology, Takizawa now recognizes Nishida's notion of the absolutely contradictory self-identity in the primal fact in Barth's theology, i.e., "Immanuel, God with us."[22] But from Barth, Takizawa learns something new: the relationship between God and human beings is irreversible. Coming to the definition of the relationship as inseparable, unidentifiable, and irreversible, Takizawa critiques Nishida's concept of "identity" as blurring the impossibility of reversing the relationship between God and

19 See Kitaro Nishida, "Was liegt dem Selbstsein zugrunde?" in *Gott in Japan: Ansöße zum Gespräch mit japanischen Philosophen, Theologen, Schriftstellern*, ed. Seiichi Yagi and Ulrich Luz (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1973), 94-112.

20 Takizawa, "Zen-Buddhismus und Christentum im gegenwärtigen Japan," in *Gott in Japan*, 144.

21 For Takizawa's critical analysis of Nishida's philosophy and Barth's theology, see Takizawa, "Die Überwindung des Modernismus—Kitaro Nishidas Philosophie und die Theologie Karl Barths," in *Reflexionen*, 127-71. The best source of Takizawa's study of Barth is the second volume of his collected works: Takizawa, *Karu Baruto kenkyu* [*Karl Barth Study*] (vol. 2 of *Takizawa Katsumi chosakushu* [*Collected Works of Katsumi Takizawa*] (Kyoto: Hozokan, 1975). Here he recalls his first meeting with Barth. He introduced himself as an exchange student from Japan intending to study philosophy. To this Barth replied, "I am not a philosopher. I am a theologian, a Christian theologian. You might be disappointed, but you are welcome to attend my lectures" (Takizawa, *Karl Barth Study*, 500). Barth himself recalls being impressed by this young man from Japan, who came looking for the right philosophy but instead "found a theology. . . . After four weeks he took a competent part in discussion, and afterwards held his own Bible class. At the end of the semester he wrote an acute article against Bultmann—but for all that, he just did not want to be baptized!" (quoted in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 202-3).

22 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I, part 1, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 107-8. Hereafter abbreviated as *CD* followed by volume and part numbers.

human beings.[23] At the same time, he faults Barth for not distinguishing between "Christ, the eternal son of God" and "Jesus in the flesh": "[Barth] does not distinguish between the Immanuel in the first sense, who exists in the present in each and every human being totally independent of historically contingent reflections, and the Immanuel in the second sense, as he takes place among us Christians, certainly only through the Holy Spirit, but as a kind of self-determination of our fleshly subject."[24]

In his distinction between the divine Christ and the human Jesus, we can already anticipate his move towards an interreligious dialogue. In his 1964 book on the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity,[25] Takizawa argues for two kinds of contact between God and human beings. The primary contact is with Immanuel: God with us. This is the primordial fact that lies foundational in each human being's existence. The person in question, however, does not always know this fact. In virtue of the primary contact, an awakening can take place in which the person becomes aware of the primary fact. Takizawa calls this encounter the secondary contact. Takizawa's Christology is developed in this context. Jesus is the one in whom the secondary contact was realized perfectly; hence, he is our model of the awakening. Nevertheless, Takizawa stresses that Jesus did not bring the primary contact itself into existence. In his judgment, traditional Christian theology made a mistake of not distinguishing the primary and secondary contacts in the person of Jesus. In reality, Gautama Buddha also established the secondary contact, opening another way to the primary contact.[26]

Up to this point, Takizawa's Christology seems to be grounded in a rather straightforward religious pluralism. The entrance of Seiichi Yagi into the debate, however, makes it a lot more complicated. Whereas Takizawa's religious interest started from Buddhism and then was drawn into Christian theology, Yagi started out from the Christian side as a New Testa-

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23 Takizawa, "Die Überwindung des Modernismus," 162.

24 Takizawa, "Über die 'Theologie des Schmerzes Gottes' von Kazo Kitamori," in *Reflexionen*, 122.

25 Katsumi Takizawa, *Bukkyo to kirisutokyo* [*Buddhism and Christianity*] (Kyoto: Hozokan, 1964).

26 See Seiichi Yagi's description of this work in Seiichi Yagi, "Christ and Buddha," in *Asian Faces of Jesus*, 32-33.

ment scholar. He studied historical-critical exegesis with Ernst Käsemann in Göttingen, but he was also influenced by Bultmann's theology. While in Germany, his fellow students repeatedly asked him about Buddhism. As a result, Yagi for the first time began to struggle with the religious ideas of his homeland, which until then had not captured his mind.[27] One day on a train ride from Frankfurt to Göttingen, Yagi became absorbed in a Zen text and had a moment of awakening (*satori*). He looked out the window as the train was passing by the town of Kassel and saw the world in a completely different way. Yagi recalls his experience:

> All the things that I saw looked quite different from before, although they remained the same. The first words I said to myself were: 'I took the tree for the tree. How wrong that was!' What I took to be a tree was in reality only the public concept 'tree.' I first introduced it into the 'object' without being aware of it, and when I saw it, I expounded only what I had put into it beforehand, and I called only that 'knowing an object.' . . . However, now I saw the 'tree' as it originally showed itself, before the formation of any concept.[28]

Thereafter Yagi started to pay a great deal of attention to the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism.[29] He is in basic agreement with Takizawa on the distinction between primary and secondary contacts, but Yagi critiques the speculative nature of Takizawa's thought and asks whether the primary contact is always so "primary." How can we be sure that the primary fact is real when we are unaware of it? Giving an example of music, Yagi argues that a piece of music that one does not understand at all is to that person a mere "accumulation of sounds."[30] "Music" is virtually

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27 Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 95-96. For a brief biographical note and a bibliography of major works, see Yagi, "Buddhistischer Atheismus und Christlicher Gott," in *Gott in Japan*, 160-61.

28 From an autobiographical anecdote by Yagi, quoted in Ulrich Luz, "Zwischen Christentum und Buddhismus: Seiichi Yagi, Japan," in *Theologen der Dritten Welt: Elf biographische Skizzen aus Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika*, ed. Hans Waldenfels (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1982), 162; trans. Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 96-97. For Takizawa's interpretation of Yagi's experience, see Katsumi Takizawa and Seeichi Yagi, *Kami wa dokode miidasareru ka* [*Where Can God Be Encountered?*] (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobo, 1977), 246-49. Although it has not been translated, this work is the most accessible single volume for studying Takizawa and Yagi side by side.

29 For Yagi's comprehensive study of Buddhism and Christianity, see his monograph in Japanese (Yagi, *Bukkyo to kirisutokyo no setten* [*The Point of Contact between Buddhism and Christianity*] [Kyoto: Hozokan, 1975]).

30 Yagi, "Christ and Buddha," 34.

nonexistent in this case. It is likewise with a religious experience. Before we have a concrete and specific religious experience, the primordial fact of God with us is totally meaningless: "This shows that 'the primary contact' is not real, virtually nonexistent, insofar as one is not aware of it." Yagi paradoxically argues for the primacy of the "secondary contact" in real experience. The secondary contact calls the primary into reality or activates the primary: "On the one hand, we can and must say that the secondary contact is based on and realized because of the primary contact. On the other hand, the reverse is also true. At the realization of the secondary contact, the primary contact is activated."[31]

This seemingly abstract discussion makes more sense when Yagi turns to the critique of Takizawa's Christology. He argues: "Although it is true that the primary contact itself was not brought into existence by Jesus for the first time, it existed only potentially and, therefore, was virtually nonexistent, before the secondary contact was realized in Jesus."[32] Yagi, therefore, affirms a uniqueness of Jesus Christ: "Jesus was the only human being, at that time and in that place, as far as the writers of the New Testament knew, in whom God was real."[33] In the end, however, Yagi agrees with Takizawa that Jesus is not the exclusive realization of the secondary contact.

Despite their differences in detail, Takizawa and Yagi share the same vision of establishing the primal fact of Immanuel (God with us) as the common ground of Buddhism and Christianity. Both are concerned to de-absolutize Christianity and their common starting point is Christology. In the Christology of Takizawa and Yagi, a great split takes place in the person of Jesus Christ—between the divine and human natures, between the kerygmatic Christ and the historical Jesus, and the former is taken back into the doctrine of God. As a result, the particular and unique person of Jesus Christ disappears. Christ becomes a mere image of God. Even anthropology is absorbed entirely into the first article of faith in such a way that being created in the image of God means that God represents Godself in any human being.

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31 Yagi, "Christ and Buddha," 34.

32 Yagi, "Christ and Buddha," 35.

33 Yagi, "Christ and Buddha," 35.

The non-traditional, and perhaps non-Christian, elements in Takizawa and Yagi's theologies are quite obvious. Since they take their point of departure from Barth, it would be useful to turn briefly to his theology in order to reveal some crucial differences between Barth on one hand and the two Japanese theologians on the other. Takizawa's characterization of the divine-human relationship as inseparable, unidentifiable, and irreversible is a distinct echo of what George Hunsinger has identified as the "Chalcedonian pattern" in Barth's theology: "intimacy" ("without separation or division"), "integrity" ("without confusion or change"), and "asymmetry" (the asymmetrical precedence of the divine over the human nature of Jesus Christ).[34] Takizawa and Yagi apply this principle only to the relationship between God and human beings without taking into account the fact that it is originally a Christological principle. The divine and human natures of Jesus are inseparable, unidentifiable, and irreversible. We come to know of our inseparable, unidentifiable, and irreversible relationship with God only through such a relationship within the person of Jesus Christ. If Yagi were to carry out his critique of Takizawa all the way—that we can start only from our concrete experience of Christ—then he would have seen that the key to the divine-human relationship lies within, not outside, Christ's person. He would then have had to face the unique and exclusive person of Jesus Christ.

Does this mean, then, that Barth's theology leaves no room for any common ground with Buddhism or any other faith? He has often been read that way, and that is how Takizawa and Yagi seem to read him. Barth, however, discusses the possibility of "secular parables of the truth" in volume 4, part 3, of his *Church Dogmatics*. It goes beyond the scope of this essay to pursue this topic, but roughly put, Barth sees the relationship of Christ the one truth to all other truths as that of the center to the periphery of a circle. And this relationship is also thoroughly Chalcedonian: inseparable, unidentifiable, and irreversible. In Hunsinger's terms, it points to "exclusivism without triumphalism" and "inclusivism without compromise."[35]

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34 George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 185-88; Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 127-42. See Barth, *CD* IV/3, 64.

35 See Hunsinger, "Epilogue: Secular Parables of the Truth," in *How to Read Karl Barth*, 234-80. Hunsinger's following explication is helpful: "Thus the distinctively Barthian

Barth falls short of explaining in detail how this relationship works in reality. Perhaps he thought that was not the concern of Christian dogmatics. Nevertheless, it is a burning concern in many parts of the world, especially in Asia, where working out a proper relationship between Christianity and Buddhism, Islam, and many other religions is a justification for Christianity's continued existence on its soil. The problem with Takizawa and Yagi is that in trying to work out this relationship, they have lost the person of Jesus Christ. Yet the task is unavoidable. Can a common ground of interreligious dialogue be found without losing sight of the exclusively unique person of Jesus Christ? The question remains to be answered.

III. CONCLUSION

There is a common concern between Ahn, who addressed the context of overwhelming poverty and oppression, and Takizawa and Yagi, who addressed the context of pervasive religiousness in Asia. It is a concern to seek God who is already with us. Ahn sought this God in Christ's self-identification with his people, *minjung*. Takizawa and Yagi did so in the primordial fact of God's immanent presence with us. The common problem in both cases is the loss of the exclusively unique person of Jesus Christ. In short, a thoroughly worked-out Christology is still to be developed in the Asian context. I long to see a faithfully orthodox and yet thoroughly contextual Christology in Asia. That is not to say, however, that we should adopt the Western understanding of Christ. It has its own problems and limits, which are unexplored here. Am I pessimistic about the possibility of an Asian Christology? I can stave off pessimism when I ask myself these questions: Who reads the Scripture sincerely as the Word of God today? Who prays as if life depended on it? Who confesses the name of Jesus Christ at a great risk? Among many, they are the Christians in the churches scattered throughout Asia. Surely God has not abandoned them.

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points about irreversibility, coinherence, and contextuality are all closely related. Essentially secular contexts, with their own intricate and dialectical interconnections of center and periphery (coinherence), effectively obviate the possibility of a progression from secular words to the Word. Yet the sovereign freedom of the Word, with its ability to posit a periphery whose scope extends beyond the sphere of the Bible and the church, effectively opens up the possibility, nonetheless, of a progression from the Word to secular words. It is on the actualization of this possibility that the occurrence of secular parables depends" (Hunsinger, "Epilogue," 265).

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In the Shadow of the Cross: The Search for the Meaning of the Person of Jesus

KRISTA MILLAY

The cross of Jesus is arguably the most central point of Christianity. It has been the consolation of martyrs, the banner of empires, and the impetus for historical research on an otherwise unknown first-century Galilean preacher. Indeed, it is the very death of Jesus upon those wooden beams that has paradoxically constituted the life of Christianity. Even the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection could not balance the rhetoric of the cross in theological formation. The cross has remained such a dominating presence in Christian reflection that the person of Jesus has become overshadowed. In the search for the meaning of the person Jesus, the cross all but dictates theological thinking. Therefore, in any effort to contemplate or examine the person of Jesus, the ascendancy of the cross must be addressed.

How did the person of Jesus come to be overshadowed by the cross? It was the construal of Jesus' death as sacrificial which permanently fixed the gaze of Christ believers upon the cross. When Jesus became the lamb of God in post-Easter theological imaginations, his personhood became overshadowed by the cross. Talk of redemption irrevocably became obsessed with blood. For both Israelite and pagan religions, for all of ancient life in general, sacrifice was a well-known social construction. Therefore, as early as the first century of Christian theological formation, sacrifice as the interpretive lens must have been an obvious choice for all who sought to make meaning from the scandalous death of Jesus. Seeing the Christ event as sacrificial must have been, on some level, a reflex reaction, as the bloody mixture of death and sacrifice saturated the ancient cultures from which Christianity arose.

What, then, has changed? Why must the person of Jesus be sought after now, instead of remaining content with the tradition of the cross as the

basis for theological meaning-making? The reason for grappling with the cross today is due to the tendency of this theological basis to re-inscribe suffering and powerlessness, as well as the historical precedence it lends to overlooking personhood and the value of the human experience. When the focus of redemption neglects the person of Jesus by dwelling upon his death instead of his life, then theology, doctrine, and church practice tend to follow suite and neglect the personhood of others. As the recognition of personhood is a crucial task of feminist theology, then feminist soteriology must especially work to restore the personhood of Jesus to the meaning of redemption. In an effort to speak of what saves us, life and living—instead of death and suffering—must be the aim of conversation. However, any feminist soteriology that intends to work within tradition must also address the *cross* without dismissing the difficult texts as merely culturally irrelevant. The cross and sacrifice are undeniably parts of Christian grammar; what is done with them, however, is negotiable. Therefore, it is the necessity of feminist theological work to claim the personhood of Jesus as necessary to soteriological understandings, amidst sacrificial notions of redemption.

Linell Elizabeth Cady, in her work "Identity, Feminist Theory, and Theology," outlines a feminist methodology that carries strong implications for this theological effort.[1] Cady calls this methodology an "emerging historicist alternative." In comparison to modernist and postmodernist approaches, Cady writes that in this "emerging feminist alternative . . . identity is not given; it is continually achieved in and through the specific ways in which the self negotiates the multiple, contesting currents and loyalties that constitute her."[2] Therefore, persons are neither radically alone and subjective, nor are they subsumed under universal proclamations. Persons are both individual and communal. They are the tapestry and the threads. Assuming this methodology as a starting point for a feminist soteriological venture allows the assertion that the cross and sacrifice, as symbols of Christian tradition, are indeed part of the grammar employed to speak

1 My use of the historicist perspective for theological theory is based upon work by Linell Elizabeth Cady, "Identity, Feminist Theory, and Theology" in *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms*, eds. Rebecca S. Chop and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

2 Cady, "Identity," 24–25.

about redemption. However, this tradition is not the only source of grammar. Feminist soteriological understandings also arise from the multiple traditions that run throughout personal and collective identities. In this way, the search for what is redemptive is connected to what already helps persons to live. For example, what do the cross and sacrifice mean, not just in terms of scripture, but in terms of the economic, social, and political traditions that impact identities? How does one speak of redemption in ways that recognize existence in multiple simultaneous communities? What should be said of the cross or redemptive sacrifice if Christian grammar is recognized but not privileged? How can the entire web of traditions, commitments, and influences that inform soteriological grammar be recognized? In a struggle to carry these questions forward, the following is an exercise in the hermeneutics of creative imagination,[3] towards a feminist soteriology that recognizes the person as an intersection amidst multiple traditions and communities, and redemptive speech as both inclusive of Christian grammar but not restricted to it.

Cady's historicist perspective will be employed by creatively imagining how the some of the earliest Christ believers, the Corinthians, struggled to speak about the cross, as persons of multiple traditions, who undoubtedly used multiple sources of grammar to understand and speak about redemption in the Jesus movement. Historical data will be used to open up imaginative spaces where personal and collective identities intersected in the ancient world and informed dynamic theological interpretation. How these first Christ-followers embraced the cross, the sacrifice of Jesus, in the midst of multiple temporal and social relations sheds light on how today's feminist soteriological efforts can embrace these symbols in the midst of a new variety of temporal and social relations. In order to achieve this aim, Paul's letters to the Corinthians will be held up to the light of the history and context of the first-century Greco-Roman world.

If the person of Jesus has been overshadowed by the cross, then the search for the personhood of Jesus should indeed begin with Paul, whose historical writings have given credence to much of sacrificial theology. For

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3 This phrase, "hermeneutics of creative imagination," is the theological methodology of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Although mentioned and employed in many of her writings, I gained first-hand experience in the use of this hermeneutic through a course taken with her at Harvard Divinity School in Spring 2005, entitled "Gospel Stories of Wo/men."

Paul, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus constituted the foundation of his gospel message. In support of his proclamation of the Christ event was the sacrificial rhetoric of Paul's social context. In Paul's extant evangelistic propaganda, however, we see that some of the communities—particularly the Corinthian communities[4]—which Paul founded were not conforming to the gospel message in the ways that he had intended. His letters to the Corinthians reveal a rhetoric aimed at persuading his converts regarding many issues.

The community members of Corinth must have been doing their own theological interpretations of the death of Jesus, in light of Paul's tremendous rhetorical efforts to convince them of particular ways of being in the world in light of a new apocalyptic perspective, the community members of Corinth must have been doing their own theological interpretations of the death of Jesus. Undoubtedly, these early Christ believers had been moving in and out of the shadow of the cross in new ways—different ways than Paul's. Why else would Paul have written so ardently and persuasively about that which he had already instructed them? Because of the textual evidence of the Corinthians' struggle to live a new life in an old context, it must be imagined that the Corinthians were doing their own contextually based theological interpretations. It is in this struggle that we see an "emerging historicist alternative" reading of the Christ-believing person. Through the gaps in our extant texts, it can be imagined that these believers interacted with the gospel message through the use of multiple social, religious, and contextual sources to formulate their own theological "grammar." And it is in these early acts of contextually based theological interpretation that today's theology may find reflections of a feminist soteriology: Christ followers searching for the person of Jesus in the shadow of the cross. To say this differently, in the Corinthian struggle to appropriate Paul's message amidst a culture of multiple traditions, there arises an ancient likeness of today's struggle to speak about redemption using contextual grammar. In today's efforts to interpret the sacrificial rhetoric of the cross for contemporary contexts, in light of the multiple traditions and

4 I will refer to the converts at Corinth as communities, in light of the historical possibility that there existed multiple groupings of converts, due to the size of Corinth and its inclusion of distant areas of land.

forces that shape believers of today, the key to a feminist search may indeed lie in the historical exploration and theological imagination of these Corinthians and their response to the cross.

But before turning to the Corinthians, a few initial observations should be noted about the shifting context of the gospel message. Sacrificial practice was a tradition that founded the entirety of Judaism and its history. From the *aqedah*, to the Passover in Egypt, to the book of Leviticus, the shedding of blood has played a pivotal role in the story of Israel. For the apostle Paul, who was a "Hebrew among Hebrews," this rhetoric of sacrifice was a basic and thoroughly integrated part of the overlapping spheres of culture, society, and religion in which he lived and breathed. Yet, the nation of Israel was not the target of Paul's evangelistic efforts. Instead, Paul largely took his Jewish→Christian[5] message to Greco-Roman audiences[6] situated in Hellenistic cultures.[7] Although the Greco-Roman context was also infused by sacrificial rhetoric, Paul's message of Jesus the Christ—the lamb of God—would not have been a simple translation.[8] Paul's engagement with a religious framework that differed from the gospel's original Jewish context meant that the death of Jesus undeniably went through a process of cultural translation for the Corinthian communities. In order to understand how a Greco-Roman audience might have done their own interpretation of a sacrificial Savior, the influences that colored their reception must be explored.

To the people living in a Greco-Roman city, sacrificial animals were a common and necessary part of the greater sacrificial system. The sacrificial system played a vital role in both constructing and supporting a

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5 This phrase, "Jewish→Christian," is intended to convey the Jewish nature of early Christianity, and point to the reality that during the Pauline missions what we now know as Christianity was at that time still a Jewish sect.

6 There is some debate among scholars as to whether or not Paul might have targeted synagogue Gentiles, or God-fearers, through preaching in synagogues within Greco-Roman cities. However, this is a detailed debate, and for the purposes of this paper, I will presume that Paul was evangelizing Gentiles of all kinds. But most important to this paper is the fact that the Corinthians were living within Greco-Roman culture.

7 This statement of the Greco-Roman audiences as Hellenistic is in no way meant to diminish the reality that Hellenism was acculturated by "Judaism" too. Rather, this statement points to the historically distinctive ways in which Greco-Romans received and participated in Hellenism, which did differ from the ways Jewish persons received and participated in it.

8 "For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7b).

particular worldview. Sacrifice was a social polemic which re-inscribed the hierarchy of gender already existent in ancient reality. Sacrifice defined reality; reality was dichotomized by gender. It was both an observation and a truism. The androcentric world of antiquity needed sacrifice to make sense of the dichotomy between men and women, but also needed sacrifice to reinforce this difference. Men controlled blood; women could not control blood. Stanley Stowers notes that "Sacrifice seems often to serve as a male counterpart to childbirth."[9] Childbirth, though bloody and nearly always associated with death, was the exclusive ability of women. From the time of conception to the birth, the child was the possession of the woman. The loss of control over his descendants was definitively regained by the man through male sacrificial practices. Only men collected the blood. Only men poured it out to the gods.[10] And by bringing his male descendants into this rite with him, a man not only reclaimed control over his lineage, but suppressed women's interference in that destiny, and reinforced the gender dichotomy.

Thus, in some ways the lamb of God could have been interpreted through these sacrificial constructions of gender. God the Father planned the death of Jesus to remedy the out of control wrongness of the His people (today known as the church, which has always been construed as feminine). Simply put, a male was needed to re-order the blood debt. But the problem with understanding the lamb of God as participating in the gender dualism of sacrificial practice is the prominence of Jesus' humanity—particularly his male humanity. Men themselves never had to offer their own blood to justify the disorder of the feminine. Indeed, the sacrifice of a man's only son would have been preposterous. Therefore, although animal sacrifice dominated the culture and informed perceptions of reality and the sacred, the lamb of God would not have fit into this Greco-Roman construction. So how else might the Corinthians have interpreted the sacrifice of Jesus? From what other traditions might they have drawn, in order to

9 Stanley Stowers, "Greeks Who Sacrificed and Those Who Did Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 300.

10 Stowers, "Greeks Who Sacrificed," 303.

make sense of Paul's rhetoric? Were there any traditions of human sacrifice in the Greco-Roman world?

Although human sacrifice was, by and large, a prohibited and distasteful behavior in the ancient world, there nonetheless exists textual evidence of human sacrifice. Several key texts from antiquity do speak of the unspeakable. Once again, the key to understanding these texts, as with all texts, is an examination of their rhetorical aim. Then it can be asked whether these texts evidence a basis for a similar understanding by the Corinthians of Paul's message of the death of Jesus.

Pausanias, the Greek traveler and geographer of the second-century C.E., gives an example of the problematic interpretation of human sacrifice in the ancient world. In his *Description of Greece*, he recounts the story of the accidental killing of a priest of Dionysus by drunken persons who were sacrificing at a temple.[11] Although unintended, this occasion of human sacrifice caused a pestilence to befall the people. Word came from Delphi, presumably from the oracle, that the means for ending the plague and amending the error was the sacrifice of a young boy to Dionysius. However, before the human sacrifice was undertaken, Dionysius substituted a goat.[12] The conclusion to be drawn from this account remains ambiguous. For, although Dionysius called for a young male victim in return for the sacrifice of a priest, he ultimately did not allow the second loss of human life and instead substituted the human sacrifice with a standard animal sacrifice.

Several more examples of ambiguity with regard to human sacrifice in ancient texts are expounded by Gabriele Weiler.[13] Before tackling the texts, Weiler delineates the difficulty of distinguishing between historical and religious purpose.

> Memories of human sacrifices as an extreme form—and at the same time also the most valuable form—of sacrifice, especially in cases of particular emergencies or of wrongdoings, are reflected in later sources. These memories of human sacrifices could have been the basis for the

11 Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 9, 8, 2.

12 J. G. Frazer, trans., *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, vol. 1 (London: St. Martin's Street, 1913), 455.

13 Gabriele Weiler, "Human Sacrifice in Greek Culture," in *Human Sacrifice in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Karin Finsterbusch, Armin Lange, and K. F. Diethard Römheld (Boston: Brill, 2007).

> development of an explaining myth, but they could have been also used for aitiological and etymological explanations of cults and epithets of divinities.[14]

In order to demonstrate this mythological tension, Weiler references Herodotus' negative description of the Persian practice of human sacrifice, as well as the uncivilized nature of human sacrifices by Scythians and by the Thracians. Additionally, Weiler cites Euripides and Plutarch as exemplifying the view that divinities could not possibly require human sacrifice. And yet, drawing upon another source, Weiler recalls Plutarch's account of the fitting sacrifice of a daughter to a goddess.[15]

Although many more texts could be cited, Weiler's examples demonstrate that the ancient world's understanding of human sacrifice cannot be painted over with a single brushstroke. What is significant about Weiler's work is that he points to the difficulty of distinguishing the purposes of these texts. To dismiss the stories as simply "mythical" misses the way these stories—and all other confounding, magical, or supernatural accounts—functioned for ancient persons. These stories were profound and important; they communicated lessons and truths. But what, then, is to be said of the contradictory accounts of human sacrifice? Just as Weiler does, the only reserved conclusion to make is that human sacrifice was an effective rhetorical tool, used by the author to achieve a particular aim. As Weiler's introduction describes, it was a rhetoric used in cases of extreme emergency or wrongdoing, as part of an origin story, or to create a negative image of one's enemies.

Is it possible that Paul's message of Jesus' death would have been interpreted as such a contextually effective rhetorical tool? Could Jesus' death have been interpreted through the rhetorical strategy of a case of extreme emergency or wrongdoing? It would have been possible to interpret the death of Jesus as human sacrifice if such rhetoric fit into a larger rhetorical scheme. In Greco-Roman religious belief, the gods and goddesses were temperamental and moody. Therefore, the shifting divine perspective and prerogative regarding human sacrifice fit into the greater cultural understanding of the nature of certain divine beings. But the message of Jesus'

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14 Gabriele Weiler, "Human Sacrifice," 37.

15 For Weiler's literary source citations see "Human Sacrifice," 37-38.

human sacrifice was in reference to a different divinity. If the Corinthians were convinced that humanity had so transgressed beyond the redemptive power of the God of Israel, then a sacrificial death by that God's own son could have been necessary. Before deciding whether such a reading would have worked for the Corinthians, let us consider another piece.

Weiler also calls for the recognition of the philosophical rhetoric of antiquity when pondering sacrificial texts. Weiler cites the promotion of the divine to being beyond human weakness and vice by both Socrates and Plato:

> Both [Socrates and Plato] refer to the 'divine' . . . which is not considered as a person, but as a principle and which is therefore far superior to the Homeric gods described as individuals with all the human weaknesses . . . . The divine principle is not thought of as a person, but it is ultimately above all people, even above ideas. . . . So it does not surprise us that [Plutarch] makes gods and humans shrink back from the realization of human sacrifice. His world of ideas does not accept gods whishing [*sic*] such acts.[16]

Therefore, if the philosophical context of the world during antiquity, particularly during the time of Plutarch (46–120 C.E.), was shifting in such a way that the divine should be above weak and evil human behaviors, then the rhetorical conception of human sacrifice may very well have been expiring, also. If Paul had convinced his Greco-Roman converts of the virtuous being of the God of Israel and the direct implications of such a God's existence for human behavior, then the rhetoric of a human sacrifice to assuage this God's anger over human weakness would have been philosophically inconsistent to Hellenistic ears. The God of Israel could not have been both willing to intervene of behalf of a new order for humanity and also more irrational than the Homeric gods. For these difficult contextual reasons, the Greco-Roman Christ believers must have sought out other traditions and social influences through which to interpret Paul's gospel message of Jesus' death as redemptive.

Before considering how the symbol of the cross and Paul's sacrificial rhetoric might have been translated through a new grammar by Greco-Roman converts, Paul's aim with the Corinthians should be addressed. The real issue at hand in Paul's letters is the Corinthian's behavior. It is

16 Weiler, "Human Sacrifice," 37.

through this behavioral lens that his rhetoric should be viewed. Even if the symbol of human sacrifice could not be culturally or rhetorically translated with exactness, the symbol must have been an effective tool in order to address this greater concern of behavior. Therefore, any explanation of how the Corinthians understood Paul's inexact rhetoric of sacrificial redemption must include a behavioral aspect. Raymond Pickett challenges, "The questions which need to be asked regarding the function of Paul's references to the death of Jesus in the Corinthian letters concern the relationship between a particular soteriological symbol which belongs to a larger complex of symbols, and the behavior and social arrangements of people who belong to a community that is defined by those symbols."[17] Pickett's assertion highlights the inability to extricate a precise or simple definition for one symbol that functioned amidst a larger social complex of many symbols. If behavioral modifications were Paul's aim, then we must ask how the symbol of sacrificial death could have operated within the social symbolic world of Hellenistic culture and tradition in a way that was directly connected to the modification of the Corinthians' behavior.

When Paul arrived at Corinth, and in his writings to the Corinthians, Paul advocated a Jewish→Christian message that was, at that time, still operating out of the logic, rhetoric, and tradition of the religion of Israel. Frances Margaret Young offers the reminder that "[a]s early as Paul's missionary journeys the new Christian movement came into contact with paganism. At this stage, the Church was still really Jewish."[18] Paul's apocalyptic *modus operandi* was to fit within his Jewish world perspective. His reasons for persuading behavior were based solely upon the Christ event, the initial evidence that God had and would break into history with a new reign. For Paul, the "already but not yet" status of existence should have been enough incentive to live differently. Evidently this apocalyptic worldview was not completely convincing to the Corinthians; thus, the impetus for Paul's passionately written letters. Except for any synagogue Gentiles among his converts, the apocalyptic worldview would not likely have been a familiar or motivating factor for behavioral modifications—particularly

17 Raymond Pickett, *The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 29.

18 Frances Margaret Young, *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ* (London: SPCK, 1975), 51.

the radical new countercultural behaviors that were proposed by Paul.[19] However, at times Judaism was admiringly perceived as a school of self-mastery in the ancient world. Therefore, the Corinthians must have drawn from their own religious and cultural constructs and traditions, from their own previous conceptions about the implications of Judaism for self-mastery, in order to substantiate new ways of existing within their society, in order to justify living a new life. [20]

Within the Greco-Roman setting, there was a philosophical tradition of martyrdom, referred to as a "noble death." A "noble death" entailed a person of great moral and ethical fortitude, choosing death rather than revoking his or her beliefs and/or teachings. With a "noble death," it was believed that the followers of the deceased would be even more empowered to live a life of equal strength and courage. In this way, the death of the philosopher was vicariously suffered for the followers and on behalf of the way of life that had been espoused. The greatest example of this tradition lies in the story of Socrates' death as recorded in Plato's *Phaedo*. In the text, Socrates is offered the opportunity to forego his impending death by renouncing his position. But the famous philosopher refuses, and chooses instead to die with his philosophy intact—a "noble death." Stephen Patterson, who has done much work on the concept of "noble death" as associated with Christian redemption, writes that such a death calls for the disciples "'to live following step by step . . . in the path' laid down by the martyr. The martyr asks of his followers only that they live as he lived, that they embrace the values he embraced, even if it should mean death in the end."[21] This tradition held that the faithful death of an unwavering, righteous person was of more benefit to the followers left behind than for that life to continue through compromising means.

Thus, the Greco-Roman context did contain the notion of a human sacrifice that was neither despised, nor barbaric, nor defied philosophi-

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19 For example, 1 Cor 10:13-31.

20 I do not intend to imply here that the "religious and cultural constructs and traditions" could be separated for the ancient person. There has been a tremendous amount of work done on the intersection and permeation of one with the other for the ancient worldview; hence, their inseparability. But further discussion of the ways in which each informed the other would require another paper.

21 Stephen J. Patterson, *Beyond the Passion: Rethinking the Death and Life of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 46.

cal virtues. Indeed, this kind of human sacrifice would have fit nicely with the philosophy of the day, which espoused that some principles are higher than others. A "noble death" was the lone sacrifice that could draw attention to the behavior of the martyr, pointing toward implications for human behavior, instead of directing attention to the gods or goddesses.

The sacrificial rhetoric that Paul used to seek new behavior with the Corinthians would have been powerful rhetoric indeed, when appropriated within the larger social context where a "noble death" was a meaningful symbol and an obvious rhetoric for behavioral change. Christ crucified, the cross itself, could have been symbols for new life—literally, new living—because of the authentic and contextually webbed theological interpretations available to the Corinthians. In this way, the Corinthians may have reflected upon the person of Jesus in order to make meaning out of his death. In order for the cross—a human sacrifice—to become culturally coherent, the Corinthians inevitably drew upon the multiple traditions that surrounded them. Through the noble death tradition, the Corinthians could have made meaning out of the human sacrifice of Jesus, using the entire web of traditions, commitments, and influences that would have informed their soteriological imaginations. Without having to disregard the economic, social, and political traditions that surrounded and couched their lives, and without having to discard Christian grammar, the Corinthians could have made profound sense of the crucified Christ as proclaimed by Paul.

With this same impulse, feminist soteriology today also draws upon the multiple traditions of persons and communities in order to make sense of the sacrificial grammar embedded within Christian grammar. It may be impossible to escape the death upon the cross, but the gaze of redemption does not have to remain there. Redemption can also look elsewhere in order to speak truthfully and authentically into the lives of real persons. Then, and only then, can redemption authentically reach multiple persons of multiple—and simultaneous—traditions. When redemption is "continually achieved in and through the specific ways in which the self negotiates . . . multiple, contesting currents and loyalties," then, and only then, is it authentic redemption.[22]

22 Cady, "Identity," 24–25.

This historicist perspective on redemption, so necessary for feminist soteriological work today, has been and continues to be the way in which the shadow of the cross is contextually negotiated by Christ believers.

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Contextualizing the Cross in terms of Shame and Honor: A Response to Krista Millay

ALICE YAFEH-DEIGH

Millay's essay does an excellent job of raising a crucial problem with traditional rhetoric about the cross. I applaud her engagement with secondary literature that highlights the different ways sacrifice was understood in the first-century Greco-Roman world. My response begins by briefly summarizing the major themes of the essay, and then narrows in on a few key points.

The declared objective of the essay is to "search for meaning in the person of Jesus" in the contemporary contexts in light of the multiple traditions and forces that shape the contemporary reader. To do that Millay must address the sacrificial rhetoric of the cross. The problem she sees with the cross as the basis for our theological meaning-making is that it reinscribes suffering and powerlessness, and it overlooks personhood and the value of the human experience. Thus, in order to look back at the person of Jesus, Millay contends, we have to step out of the shadow of the cross. Why? Because the cross has become so dominant in Christian soteriological discourse that it has overshadowed the personhood of Jesus. This is a result of Jesus' death being construed in sacrificial terms within a sacrificial culture that had become obsessed and saturated with blood.

In order to problematize traditional cruciocentric rhetoric, Millay foregrounds her analysis in feminist soteriological framework. She privileges the feminist interpretive framework because discourses about Jesus within it are emphatically personhood-oriented. This feminist optic legitimates Millay's quest for a restoration of the person of Jesus through moving away from the shadow of the cross. Millay appropriates Elizabeth Cady's model of "emerging historicist alternative,"

which she uses to broaden the Christian grammar to include the "multiple traditions that run throughout our personal and collective identities." This enables Millay to ask questions regarding the economic, social, and political implications of the rhetoric of the cross.

Millay proceeds to her hermeneutics of creative imagination via an examination of the Corinthian correspondence where she claims that the Corinthians struggled to speak about the cross, using multiple sources of grammar. According to Millay, the fact that the Corinthian believers embraced the cross in the midst of multiple temporal and social relations legitimates contemporary doing of the same.

In order to show how some within the Corinthian community construed the rhetoric of the cross, Millay contextualizes the message of the cross within the social, historical, and cultural context of the first-century Mediterranean world in which Paul's sacrificial rhetoric first evoked its meaning. This contextualization is necessary because, in addition to the gospel message, members of the Corinthian community appeal to numerous social, religious, and contextual sources to formulate their own theological "grammar." The conclusion of Millay's socio-historical investigation is that the Corinthian believers were probably influenced by "noble death" ideology, given that they were trying to make meaning of the cross in a social context "where a "noble death" was a meaningful symbol and an obvious rhetoric for behavioral change. Socrates is a case in point. His death is illustrative of a notion of human sacrifice that was not always despised or considered barbaric in the Greco-Roman context. Millay concludes her historical reconstruction by suggesting that the "noble death" model be used as a lens for understanding the death of Jesus, since the "'noble death' was the lone sacrifice that could draw attention to the behavior" of Jesus.

A major deficiency in Millay's paper is that she neither clarifies key concepts nor cites relevant evidence to make her case. On many occasions she hazards claims about feminist soteriology without laying out the specific contours of feminist soteriology, except for asserting that feminists have stepped out of the shadow of the cross in order to imagine the person of Jesus.

A question I want to put to Millay is this: If the fundamental goal of the essay is to "search for the meaning of the person of Jesus," should you not begin by telling us what you mean by "the person of Jesus"? Further, if personhood underscores who Jesus is, is not the cross constitutive of that person? Must one walk out of the shadow of the cross to address this personhood? A good point Millay raises—but does not develop—is the way traditional atonement theologies have historically overemphasized the salvific significance of the suffering and death of Jesus and virtually sidelined "the equally redemptive significance of his life and ministry."[1] Feminist and Womanist theologies of atonement have responded by enacting various paradigm shifts in order to highlight the importance of the entirety of Jesus' life and ministry. The governing presupposition has been that placing singular emphasis upon Jesus' death results in the glorification and justification of suffering. One detrimental consequence of a Christian doctrine of redemptive suffering is that structures of systemic oppression have used aspects of this theology to reinscribe and sacralize suffering. As Marit Trelstad cogently puts it, "[T]heologies of retributive and substitutionary suffering ascribe to Jesus a victim identity, which reinscribes rather than resists a victim identity for already oppressed men and women. Identifying with the suffering rather than with the ministry of Jesus may undermine the full subjectivity of women."[2]

Therefore, the feminist paradigm shift crystallizes the conviction that there is a mutual interrelationship between the life and ministry Jesus and the events of the cross. Neither can be fully understood without discussion of the other. Both helpful and fruitful would be a holistic approach that moves away from the either/or paradigm to a both/and paradigm that fully embraces and holds the pre- and post-resurrection life and ministry of Jesus in creative and dynamic tension, assigning redemptive significance to both.

Let me now move to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, which was the main focus of Millay's analysis. I applaud Millay's efforts in imagining how Paul's discourse about the cross could function within its specific social

1 Rosemary P. Carbine, "Contextualizing the Cross for the Sake of Subjectivity," in *Cross-Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today,* ed. Marit A. Trelstad (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 93.

2 Carbine, "Contextualizing the Cross," 93.

and cultural contexts. A text can be reread and re-appropriated for a new context only when one examines how the text functioned within its own context. However, historical recontexualization is meant to help one understand phenomena within a particular text, and until it does this specific task, it is insufficient.

There is no question that the Corinthian correspondence is couched in terms of a central message of the cross that provides the normative model for believers. To be sure, the cross is theologically redefined in order to provide believers with a new behavioral paradigm for living out the distinctiveness of their calling.

Millay hypothesizes that the Corinthian community was constructing their own theological interpretations of the sacrifice of Jesus. In doing so, they "were moving in and out of the shadow of the cross in new ways—different ways than Paul." Millay goes on to say: "Because of these textual evidences of the Corinthians' struggle to live a new life in an old context, we must imagine acts of contextually based theological interpretation." However, one looks in vain for such textual evidence in her essay. Millay talks about "gaps in our extant texts," yet does not once address a particular text. For this reason, I do not think Millay does justice to the complexity of the issue in the Corinthian community that elicited Paul's theology of the cross.

A responsible hermeneutical strategy is one that not only looks behind the text for clues about a text's meaning, but also takes very seriously the rhetorical and literary context of the text in question. Millay's essay does not give the necessary attention to the literary context of Paul's sacrificial rhetoric; thus I was surprised by the line of reasoning that leads Millay to her basic conclusions about the Corinthian community's understanding of Jesus' death as a "noble death." First, she offers no clues from a text that might help us infer that the Corinthian community was familiar with the ideology of the "noble death" and that the ideology of "noble death" could be the precise theological or sociological problem that elucidates Paul's own theology of the cross. The complex nature of the Corinthian correspondence makes it methodologically difficult, if not impossible, to determine with precision the theological background of Paul's theology of the cross.

Second, Millay offers no example of "noble death" that involved hanging on a cross. It is not the sacrifice *per se* that is despicable and barbaric; it is the "how" of the sacrifice—in Jesus' case, a death on the cross.

An alternative paradigm—one that could make it possible for the symbol of the cross to be positively retrieved and appropriated for women's struggles for justice and wholeness—is placing Paul's rhetoric about the cross within the contemporary Greco-Roman social concern for honor. My contention is that Paul's cruciocentric rhetoric in 1 Corinthians functions to subvert the cultural structures of honor and shame. The discourse of the cross in 1 Cor 1:10–4:21 is framed in language that evokes honor and shame categories. In the Greco-Roman world, the cross is generally perceived as a symbol of shame (Heb 12:2), and a symbol of status degradation. Because death by crucifixion was the quintessential symbol of shame, it was punishment reserved for slaves, bandits, prisoners of war, and revolutionaries.[3] This explains why Paul says the cross of Christ is a stumbling block for the Jews and folly for the Greeks (1 Cor 1:23). But in Paul's evaluation of the cross, what is foolishness, weakness, failure and shame in the standard of valuation of the world, is a demonstration of the "wisdom of God," the power of God to save those who believe (1:17-21). The weakness of the cross is the means by which God's power is revealed. Since God is the source of believers' sense of self-worth and identity, what counts as honorable and dishonorable is no longer based on approbation or disapprobation by the dominant culture. Thus, in 1 Corinthians, Paul is less concerned with interpreting the suffering and death of Jesus as an atoning sacrifice as in disrupting the dominant cultural assessment of status.

The aforementioned deficiencies notwithstanding, I sincerely thank Millay for the excellent job of laying out basic problems with soteriological paradigms that create a disjuncture between the life-ministry of Jesus and his suffering and death. Millay has rightly stressed the need for alternative ways of understanding the cross which avoid the negative pitfalls of traditional atonement theologies.

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3 Cf. J H. Neyrey, "Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative," *Semeia* 68 (1994): 114; Hartin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 46-63; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.253; 5.451; and *Ant.* 17.295.

Signs of Grace: Religion and American Art in the Gilded Age. By Kristin Schwain. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008, 172 pages.

The study of visual culture emerged in the 1970s out of the broader field of material culture studies when scholars began to consider "things" in addition to "ideas." Moving away from the isolation of text-only research, scholars from a variety of fields sought to understand religious practice and thought through an exploration of the physical and material world. Following in the footsteps of David Morgan and Sally Promey, among others, Kristin Schwain takes up the mantle of visual culture and religion studies in her slim, and yet provocative volume, *Signs of Grace*.

Schwain's work examines the interchange between art and religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the American Northeast and how this interchange constructed modern visual practices. Through a close study of four artists—Thomas Eakins, Henry Ossawa Tanner, F. Holland Day, and Abbott Handerson Thayer—Schwain probes the relational intersection of the artists' religious beliefs and practices and their creative exploration of new relationships between viewers and objects. Schwain wants to demonstrate how the "beholders of art" of the late nineteenth century began to turn to art for experiences of the transcendent and religious motivation. In this sense, Schwain describes the response of viewers to an image and how the image reflects the culture.

Schwain opens her investigation with a brief contextualization of American Christian visual culture in the nineteenth century, marking the course changes of the period. Importantly, she demonstrates how viewers began to see art as a portal to individual religious experience and devotional purposes. This allowed many to move beyond their typical Protestant iconoclasm toward acceptance of images. Despite a tendency of cultural historians to note a decline in religion during this period, Schwain effectively traces an increase in the popularity of religious images outside of the church in both private and public settings. Art and religion helped combat the stress of rapid change, she argues, through a period of industrialization, capitalist expansion, and a sense of unease over authority and morality. Schwain contends that the art of Eakins, Tanner, Day, and Thayer

"registered this cultural milieu and constituted it, creating a contemporary set of symbols and viewing practices that mediated between the natural and supernatural realms and defined the role of the individual within them. . ." (11).

Illustrations pepper the book. Unfortunately, the reproductions of the majority of images are in black and white with only seven images reproduced in color on white, high-gloss paper. Most likely due to printing costs, Schwain overcomes this distraction with careful descriptions, assisting the reader in pulling out subtle aspects of the images that could go unnoticed black and white reproductions. Schwain makes the artist's world accessible to us through in-depth interpretation of the art by the artist himself and by sharing both viewers' experiences of the art as well as the critics'.

Schwain's selection of four artists enables her to uncover several different facets of American art and religion at the turn of the nineteenth-century including Catholicism, race, class, liberal Protestantism, and gender. For example, although Eakins was not a Catholic, his clerical portraits attempted to bridge the growing chasm between "perception and reality" in his realist portraits of major Catholic figures in Philadelphia. Schwain avers that Eakins's fascination with Catholicism reveals his concern for social organization, hierarchy, and the delicacies of translation of the spiritual into the material world. Bumpy at times, Schwain's chapter on Tanner nevertheless provides access to the intersections of race, class, and religious practice in the world of American religious art. Tanner's deep involvement with the American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church expressed itself in the repeated theme of restraint in religious expression that was "ardent but formal, inwardly felt but emotionally subdued" (60). Tanner sought to curtail the traditional stereotypes of African Americans by providing a replacement he hoped would be emulated. Day presents an interesting case study for Schwain due to his combination of religion and photography at its emergence in the nineteenth century. His photography helped usher in the modernist perspective of "art for art's sake" drawing on familiar forms and photographing them, challenging the viewer into a new conception. Schwain shows how this interpretative frame moved Day's pieces into the realm of sacred art, inviting the viewer to commune with the divine. Lastly, Schwain moves deeper into the realm of icons and

Protestant adaptations of this form in the work of Thayer. Thayer's images focused on the ideal of womanhood, encouraging viewers' devotion to representative types in an effort to mediate between the material and spiritual realms. Schwain's extensive treatment of Thayer uncovers the tensions in gender roles and religion in American Protestantism.

Schwain writes each chapter clearly, with the exception of the chapter on Tanner. Perhaps the greatest deficiency of *Signs of Grace* rests in its lack of a conclusion. Schwain provides a solid introduction; however, after her succinct study of the four artists, she leaves her reader yearning for insight into the next phase of religion and art. Schwain's deft interweaving of the artists' backgrounds, the reception of the art by average viewers, and how critics of the time interpreted the pieces in a new way gives new dimension to Victorian religious worldviews.

The written word maintains its dominance in scholarship by a perceived superiority of the written over the visual. Meanwhile, the variety of images, especially architecture and mass-produced works, languish unattended in religious studies, despite the valiant efforts of a handful of devoted scholars. *Signs of Grace* clearly breaks out of the traditional mode of scholarship and successfully illustrates changes in religious practice at the turn of the nineteenth century by examining the way artists depicted religious topics and how viewers received their pieces.

NICOLE C. KIRK
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Short World History of Christianity. By Robert Bruce Mullin. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008, 312 pages.

With a title like *A Short World History of Christianity*, one might imagine that this book would fail before it begins. The 2,000 year history of Christianity does not easily lend itself to a recounting that is both brief in length and broad in coverage. Such an undertaking simply seems too ambitious for even the most talented of historians. Robert Bruce Mullin,

however, is surprisingly successful at meeting the four objectives for his history that he lays out in the introduction.

First, Mullin wants to tell the history of Christianity in such a way that the general reader can both understand and enjoy it. He does this with a narrative that is driven by a relatively simple thesis: Christianity began as diversified communities, unified under Latinization, and has only recently returned to its former diversity. During the first thousand years of its existence, Christianity consisted of local and regional churches with no obvious center. Between the years 1050 and 1300, this began to change as the once weak Western church rose in prominence and importance. The Latin Church became unified both institutionally and devotionally. Institutionally, the pope gained greater power over the political realm. When Henry IV refused to grant Pope Gregory authority over clerical appointments, for example, the pope excommunicated him and released Henry's vassals from serving him. Henry was only able to rectify the situation by standing barefoot in the snow for several days before confessing his sins to the pope. Devotionally, popular piety became increasingly fixated on the person of Jesus Christ and the *vita apostolica*. The newfound affection for Jesus gave rise to the Franciscan movement and an expanded Mariology. Among other things, the *vita apostolica* encouraged poverty, activism, and an enlarged role for women in the religious life. By the end of the fifteenth century if not before, the story of Christianity became the story of the Latin West. This Latin hegemony would exist largely unchallenged until the twentieth century. The two world wars and the economic crisis in between them weakened public confidence in European nations and the Christianity they proclaimed. Those regions outside of the Christian West became more active in shaping their own destinies. Furthermore, Mullin believes that the shift in the Catholic position spurred on by John Paul II was a vital step in the process of moving beyond a Eurocentric Christianity as the pope sought to eschew nineteenth-century liberalism while returning to Catholicism's conservative theology. As in its earliest days, the voice of Christianity has finally returned to local, regional churches.

Second, Mullin wants to recover and restore the histories of Christianities which are generally left out of most discussions because of their usual classification as "heterodox." This primarily means that Mullin provides a

little more history on the Nestorian and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Third, and related to the second, Mullin desires to include the contributions of recent scholarship on marginalized groups in history including women, laity, and various ethnicities. In short, Mullin tries to write a history of Christianity that does not merely focus on Catholic or Protestant white, European men.

Mullin's final goal is to offer a history that covers both intra-ecclesial and extra-ecclesial topics such as worship and the church's relationship to the state respectively. Here, he examines the history of the church from the inside and the outside, focusing on both its theological and political struggles. Thus, Mullin's book is concerned with representing both intellectual and social history.

Although Mullin accomplishes these four objectives respectably, his book is still burdened by the expected difficulties that any short, world history of Christianity faces. In trying to write a book that is simultaneously useful to the general reader and the scholar, Mullin ultimately disappoints both. Mullin avoids using any footnotes and instead offers a short bibliography for each chapter at the end of the book to guide further reading. While the lack of footnotes might appear to make the book friendlier for the general reader, it is actually a disservice to anyone seeking to pin down the source of Mullin's information. Moreover, the bibliographic guide for suggested reading is fraught with its own problems. No *guidance* is actually given. How a general reader could move easily from Mullin's book to the suggested text of Khaled Anatolios's *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* is beyond me.

My last complaint could be extended to any book which forces an oversimplification and generalization of complex issues. One particular instance in Mullin's book which requires a more nuanced approach comes in the sixth chapter where the author writes, "[The Council of] Chalcedon claimed doctrinal closure for the question of Christology just as Constantinople had claimed it for the Trinity" (71). Anyone familiar with the early church period should recognize that the Chalcedonian formula claimed no such thing. In the East alone, three more ecumenical councils sought to better understand the Incarnation and its implications for theology and worship. Some might argue that all of Christian theology is still concerned

with this same question. Likewise, Gregory of Nazianzus abandoned his position at the Council of Constantinople in part, because he was unhappy with its meager confirmation of the Holy Spirit's equality with the Father and the Son. Neither Chalcedon nor Constantinople was easily or ultimately accepted as the final word on Christological or Trinitarian thought.

Although this book is not perfect, its strengths certainly outweigh its weaknesses. Mullin's thesis provides an easy access point into the overwhelming topic of church history. Furthermore, this history is easily one of the best of its kind. In the introduction of his book, Mullin states that his ultimate goal in writing such a history is to encourage his readers to research the subject on their own. In this, Mullin surely succeeds.

JEREMY WALLACE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Guide to Preaching and Leading Worship. By William H. Willimon. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008, 108 pages.

In *A Guide to Preaching and Leading Worship*, United Methodist bishop and former dean of the Duke University Chapel William H. Willimon offers a helpful primer for clergy on the practice of crafting and leading "vibrant Sunday morning worship" (ix). Identifying preaching and worship as insufficiently attended to by many clergy, Willimon contends that excellence in these tasks of pastoral ministry is essential for the health and effectiveness of growing churches. With a keen focus on developing effective practitioners, Willimon systematically works through worship planning, liturgical leadership, sacramental practice, preaching, and evaluation.

One of the great strengths of this resource is the depth of pastoral care in its writing. As a bishop responsible for hundreds of clergy and congregations, Willimon is interested in the pastoral dimension of preaching and worship leadership. Regarding innovation in worship, Willimon challenges pastors to study the congregation's worship patterns before acting, to make decisions about change only with significant lay involvement, and to be continually open to input from parishioners and the Holy Spirit.

Undoubtedly, Willimon has encountered many well-intended clergy (myself included) who have pushed ahead with change for valid theological or liturgical reasons while neglecting the pastoral needs of a congregation.

Similarly, Willimon clearly underscores the contextual dimension of preaching, noting that "part of the beauty of your preaching is that it is *pastoral*—a specific word addressed to a specific congregation" (52). Calling for a renewal of what he terms "Biblical preaching," Willimon encourages the use of the lectionary as a means to anchor preaching in the Scripture rather than the personal preferences or motivations of the preacher. At the same time, the pastoral dimension of preaching demands that the pastor attend to the text in context, asking: What does the text say? What did the text mean in its original context? And, what does the text mean for us today? Using these questions to guide sermon writing enables pastors to bring the Scripture to life in the unique context of a specific congregation.

Another strength of this resource for parish pastors is Willimon's call for renewed attention to the sacramental life of the congregation. He argues that many churches have turned the sacraments into "individualized, privatized acts of personal piety rather than the communal, familial, ecclesial acts they were meant to be" (41). Noting the importance of sacraments for linking our faith in Christ with "every day life," Willimon offers practical suggestions for pastors seeking to revive sacramental practice. These suggestions include: restoring the Eucharist to its rightful place in worship, utilizing the sacramental rites of one's denomination, preaching and teaching on the sacraments in order to enhance congregational understanding, paying attention to the mechanics of leadership of these rites, and preparing congregants for meaningful participation in the sacraments.

As with any work, there are minor criticisms that can be levied against Willimon's *Guide to Preaching*. As a work of practical theology, this book is heavily slanted towards the pragmatic dimension of pastoral leadership, often avoiding normative discussion of liturgical and sacramental theology. One wonders if it is possible to renew sacramental practice in the congregation without a deep understanding of sacramental theology. At the same time, however, this may fall beyond the scope of Willimon's primary

aim: namely, to provide practical wisdom for the basic tasks of ministry. Further, in its concrete specificity, one is left to wonder whether pastors will simply attempt to follow Willimon's prescriptive "recipes" for preaching and worship leadership rather than learning to practice these pastoral arts in context.

In *A Guide to Preaching and Worship Leadership,* Willimon forcefully calls for excellence in the "basic tasks" of congregational leadership – preaching and worship leadership. Aware that most lay people are seeking vibrant worship and dynamic preaching, Willimon encourages preachers to develop core competency in rules of art for liturgical leadership. At the same time, he offers sage, practical advice for developing the necessary tools for carrying out these tasks. A depth of experience, a passionate commitment to the ministry of the church, and a profound sense of humility underscore his writing and yield a much-needed, helpful resource for clergy seeking to preach and lead worship with pastoral excellence.

DREW A. DYSON
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach. By Carrie Doehring. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006, 184 pages.

In *The Practice of Pastoral Care,* Carrie Doehring has written an introduction to pastoral care that is based upon the assumption that we are all socially located, and that our knowledge cannot be separated from our position as persons of a particular gender, class, and ethnicity. She addresses the thoroughgoing influence of social context on both the provision of care and the construction of pastoral theological knowledge, insisting that there are no universal theological or psychological perspectives on which to base one's pastoral care. She operates from a postmodern position, insisting on the provisional nature of knowledge, but also suggesting that a postmodern person can use both pre-modern and modern views of the world, incorporating them when they might be helpful.

Her primary conversation partners are narrative and family systems theories. She is also indebted to theologians like Robert Neville and James Poling.

Doehring structures the book in seven interrelated movements, which do not necessarily follow a linear ordering, but build upon the insights of the previous logical step within the book. This seven-step process progresses as follows: (1) listening; (2) counter-transference; (3) establishment of a contract of care that includes limits to confidentiality; (4) assessing issues of loss, violence and coping strategies; (5) assessing the strengths and liabilities of systems; (6) reflecting theologically; and (7) developing plans of care that implement healing and justice.

In her chapter on listening, Doehring contextualizes traditional pastoral care listening techniques, depicting in a fascinating manner some limits to the effectiveness of traditional American Protestant pastoral care for diverse populations. She demonstrates that the healing conversations that occur in pastoral care must be based upon an ever-expanding acquaintance with the way social location influences how a person interprets the world. Doehring shows how it is becoming increasingly clear that care does not translate easily across cultures. Universal forms of care are not available to the pastor, who must learn what care means in each particular context.

Doehring's book is intended for the seminary student who is entering a caregiving ministry, and it fulfills this function. The book has broad applications to both congregational and specialized ministries. The way that Doehring demonstrates coordination of care between ministers and other caregiving specialists, in relation to addiction, abuse, and mental illness, is especially helpful. Her case studies depict caregivers who are aware of their boundaries and rely upon consultation to improve their care, while also caring for themselves in the midst of this challenging work. She provides schemas for evaluating suicide risk and the consequences of trauma, and frequently encourages referral to ministers who risk trying to operate beyond their competencies. The resources she provides are helpful for those beginning their career in pastoral ministry.

In order to use her text effectively, however, the new minister may need supplemental resources that could indicate how to best make a referral to another professional. Additionally, Doehring seems to assume

the presence of a broad range of available social services, when in fact the situation for a local minister in a more isolated setting might be quite different (at one point she fantasizes that a pastor might have a "team of social workers" at his or her disposal; 147). The book seems to change after her discussion of listening and counter-transference, adopting a more diagnostic tone, in which assessment seems to be accomplished through asking extensive questions. It would be helpful if Doehring showed how caregivers could get the information they need to plan their care, while at the same time continuing to build relationships with a less intrusive conversation style.

Doehring's writing is strongest when she claims her own ground as a postmodern scholar. At one point, she admits that postmodern thought provides a better basis for pastoral care than premodern or modern thought. In this confession, she is able to provide a clearer vision for care than when she suggests, as she does several times in the book, that the skilled caregiver can easily switch between a postmodern, modern, and premodern framework, as if they were "lenses" that a person could easily change. Instead, our reality seems to be much more firmly bound to the intellectual and cultural climate in which we live; we are unable to imagine ourselves as pre-Enlightenment people and no one is entirely able to dodge the difficult epistemological questions of postmodern philosophy.

Nevertheless, *The Practice of Pastoral Care* is a rich resource for the student and practitioner of pastoral care. By showing us how deeply cultural context influences pastoral care, Doehring encourages a kind of humility that is necessary as one engages in the complex ministry that is pastoral care. Readers will find a compassionate and thoughtful guide through many of the pressing issues in which a caregiver is called upon to be present, to provide guidance, and also to intervene in situations of violence and abuse. This book assists the practitioner through these steps in a clearer and more helpful fashion than most introductory texts in pastoral care.

PHILIP BROWNING HELSEL
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church. By George E. Demacopoulos. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, 274 pages.

Interest in Christian spiritual direction continues to grow in our time, causing scholars to reach deeply into the life of the historical church in an effort to describe the nature and influence of this pastoral practice. George Demacopoulos provides a thoughtful contribution to the growing body of literature on spiritual direction by exploring the spiritual guidance of leaders in the patristic period. Spiritual direction is defined by Demacopoulos as "the modus operandi by which religious authorities (in both lay and monastic communities) sought to advance the spiritual condition of those under their care" (1). Demacopoulos concentrates on five leaders from the fourth through sixth centuries who "cast a long shadow into the Middle Ages" and "made an original contribution to the history of spiritual direction" (19). He gives special attention to the criteria set for spiritual authority, to the advice offered for subordinate ministers, and to the leader's methods of spiritual direction. Demacopoulos asserts that monks trained in asceticism became bishops responsible for spiritual leadership of lay people. This led to tensions between ascetic ideals and the realities of episcopal leadership, tensions that each leader resolved in different ways through their specific spiritual guidance of the church.

Demacopoulos begins his study with Athanasius who experienced a tumultuous tenure as bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius turned to the ascetic community for protection during his ecclesial battles and selected ascetics for pastoral ministry. Demacopoulos argues successfully that Athanasius encouraged monastic fathers to tend to the spiritual formation of novice monks while appearing somewhat ambivalent about the spiritual father/disciple model for laity, likely for fear that they would find guidance among rival Arian groups. In Demacopoulos's opinion, Athanasius was unable to resolve the tension between ascetic ideas and the responsibility of pastoral supervision in large part because of his concern for doctrinal instruction and his own tenuous political position.

Like Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen brought together the ascetic and clerical traditions, yet he did with the goal of synthesizing them. Gregory

expected ecclesial leaders to be well-educated aristocrats able to articulate Christian truths, a common ecclesial requirement. He added the ascetic prerequisite of attaining purification through renunciation and contemplation. Gregory taught that one must be "near to God in order to lead others" and at the same time excel in doctrinal instruction. Demacopoulos argues that Gregory was the first ecclesial leader to recommend a gradual system of spiritual direction in the church based upon individualized needs for spiritual healing and ascetic advancement, widespread practices in the monastic community. In keeping with the emphasis upon healing, Gregory alters the tradition slightly by replacing spiritual father with spiritual physician.

Demacopoulos suggests that the blending of ascetic and clerical traditions would have been possible for Augustine of Hippo, but the bishop resisted this fusion. For Augustine, the priest as spiritual director was an administrator and a disseminator of Christian doctrines, rather than an ascetic spiritual father. Like Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine expressed concern about a monk's potential lack of education and social stature. Augustine parted ways with the ascetic tradition by arguing that spiritual formation emphasizes advancement in knowledge and love rather than any specific ascetic practices. The bishop of Hippo valued spiritual and mental enlightenment more than ascetic discipline in the choice of ecclesial authority. Demacopoulos makes a strong argument that Augustine resisted the ascetic model because his understanding of what constituted orthodoxy frequently did not support existing ascetic practice.

John Cassian was one of Augustine's sharpest critics as Demacopoulos rightly acknowledges. John was devoted to the adoption of Eastern monastic traditions, and he embraced the spiritual-father model of religious direction in which the advisor took on an important role in assisting the disciple on the path to perfection and spiritual enlightenment. Qualified leadership required the leader's own progress in the spiritual life which included ascetic practices coupled with love, obedience, and discernment. Demacopoulos describes effectively several dimensions of the spiritual father/disciple form of Christian direction including gradual, individualized correction, internalization of the spiritual battle, emulation of the saintly exemplar, and the role of action and reflection in community. Cassian is

the only one of the five studied who did not have responsibilities in the episcopate. What the author might have addressed further is Cassian's role in developing what came to be known as classical spiritual direction more narrowly defined.

Demacopoulos's discussion of Pope Gregory I may be his most convincing. He argues that "by completing the merger between ascetic and clerical strands of the pastoral tradition, Gregory did nothing less than redefine Christian leadership" (129). He points effectively to Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* in which the pope laid bare his intent to form the priest into a spiritual father for laity modeled after the monastic *abba*. Gregory chose professed ascetics for episcopal leadership, and he emphasized ascetic language in his writings in a way that Demacopoulos understands to be revolutionary. In Gregory's view, the local priest served best by balancing isolated contemplation with administration, preaching, and individualized spiritual care through discernment of vices and virtues and the determination of paths to spiritual recovery.

By discussing each of these church leaders, Demacopoulos charts the merging of the clerical tradition with the ascetic ideal through varied approaches to spiritual direction. Demacopoulos's work may be most insightful for the fields of historical and spiritual theology. He provides an important contribution to the conversation on the relationship between asceticism and ecclesial authority in late-ancient Christianity. An extensive bibliography is included with the text, which offers scores of resources for further study. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the text also provides some introduction to the place of spiritual direction in the life of the church.

The reader must note, however, that Demacopoulos defines spiritual direction broadly, and he acknowledges that he uses the term almost interchangeably with pastoral care. As a result, the practice of spiritual direction as a specific one-with-one relationship between a spiritual parent and disciple is only one dimension of the larger pastoral practice with which Demacopoulos is concerned. Demacopoulos' broad definition for spiritual direction could be seen as leaving the text in danger of diluting the particularity of the ancient practice to the point that it speaks of ministry and spiritual care in general. As a result,

those looking to arrive at a greater understanding of the historic practice of spiritual direction must mine specific insights from among the broad strokes. If readers accept Demacopoulos's understanding of spiritual direction and pastoral care, however, they will certainly benefit from his carefully woven treatise on the integration of ascetic spiritual care with the development of the ecclesial office in Christianity of late antiquity.

ANGELA REED
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity. By Philip Jenkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 316 pages.

In *The Next Christendom* Philip Jenkins argues that Hilaire Beloc's classic statement that "Europe is the faith" should now be changed to "Africa is the faith" (89). He does so by retelling the Christian story within its comprehensive global context. World Christianity must no longer be conceived of solely as what is happening in North Atlantic contexts, because while European and North American Christianity wanes, in the South, particularly Africa, Christianity is growing exponentially. Moreover, it is fast becoming the leading global faith, spreading even more rapidly than Islam—both through reproduction and conversion.

Jenkins observes that the current exponential growth of the Church within the global South is correlative to the rapid expansion of the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostalism has assisted in the widespread creation of Christian communities which offer a context in which members, especially women, are active participants. More concerned with the shared celebration of their worship experiences than with liberalism and secularism, these congregations focus on the challenges presented by felt-needs of poverty, illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, and encounters with evil forces culminating in spiritual warfare. With respect to the latter, indigenous worldviews die hard and Southern believers retain their core values and beliefs within their Christian faith. Thus, issues of biblical hermeneutics are prominent inasmuch as Christians in the South believe that God's word provides them with empowerment for victory over both natural and supernatural evils. The biblical worldview resonates with their conception of the

universe. Loosing the captives, casting out demons, healing and deliverance, liberating the oppressed, and defeating poverty take place against the backdrop of constant spiritual warfare between God and Satan with his demons. Other topics Jenkins explores include the binary opposition between Christianity and Islam, sexual morality, and the South becoming progressively religious in comparison to Western liberalism and secularism.

As a popular exposition of this emerging global religious movement, the significance of *The Next Christendom* for World Christianity cannot be overemphasized. This volume brings into sharp relief a plethora of realities prevalent throughout the South that many Northern scholars tend to ignore. When Northern issues of postmodernity are the focus of theological reflection, religion is pushed to the periphery. However, when viewed through the less parochial perspective of the South, religion returns to the foreground as pressing global concern. Thus, Jenkins calls for a radical self-appraisal within Western Christianity, perhaps even "re-engineering" its expression of the faith. Southern Christianity as the emergent form of global Christianity must be allowed to tell its own story. Outmoded forms of Western missionary enterprise should cease their self-congratulation, and allow Southern Christianity to liberate itself from the lingering vestiges of colonial Christianity clothed in Western cultural garb.

However, despite these salutary observations and arguments, several caveats remain. First, there is an over-dependence on demographic information in Jenkins's presentation. Numbers are not the whole story. Statistics deceive and predictions about demographics often mislead and disappoint. For instance, while the church at present enjoys exponential growth, factors such birth rate, death rate, infant mortality, and maternal mortality are very high in much of Africa which renders problematic growth by reproduction. Prevalent, too, is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which makes population studies and predictions in African contexts very difficult. In short, overstretching this growth argument seems problematic.

Second, there is much over-generalization and anecdotal evidence cited throughout the volume, such as: "According to one recent account…"; "According to one presenter…"; or "A friend once described visiting one of the most popular up-and-coming evangelical churches in Ghana."

Similarly, Jenkins overstates, and somewhat sensationalizes, the conflict between Christianity and Islam as being wholesale civilizational war. He suggests that this binary conflict will be aggravated where the two world religions compete for converts. Such statements, without further support, are problematic. Often, Jenkins is far too reliant on others' opinions, such as Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, and Lamin Sanneh.

Third, the fact of exponential growth in African Christianity cannot be disputed. I suggest, however, that an uncritical view of this phenomenon is unsuitable for African Christianity. For example, one must discover the reasons for the current unpopularity of African Independent Churches (AICs), compared to the 1950s and 1960s before any wholesale glowing description is made of African Christianity. African Christianity should take into consideration the authenticity of its ethos, theology, and practice. Thus, Jenkins should be seen as calling for African Christians to take a deep and critical look into its scheme of operations. More importantly, African Christianity must strive to learn from what is happening in the North to avoid any mistaken complacency. Romanticism will do African Christianity no good.

The Next Christendom is the beginning of Jenkins's enormous contribution to World Christianity in his trilogy that also includes *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford, 2006) and *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (Oxford, 2007). However, Ogbu Kalu's observation that accounts of Africa from Western perspectives are in some cases "a thick description of a group of Africans dancing without hearing their music" aptly fits Jenkins. While Jenkins has a brilliant academic description of Africans dancing, he himself has neither seen the dance, nor danced himself. Thus, in itself, *The Next Christendom* is not enough. But if Jenkins's work points North Atlantic Christians to indigenous accounts of Southern Christianity (for scholars, clergy, and laity alike), then his text is of enormous value both to the academic study of religion and for the ecclesial practices of the faith.

YAW ATTA EDU-BEKOE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible. By M. Daniel Carroll R. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008, 174 pages.

This past year has been marked by the heated debate on the issue of immigration and interest in the topic has not been confined to academic circles. In fact, immigration became an important theme in the U.S. presidential campaign. M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, brings the perspective of one who can navigate the diverse worlds of majority and immigrant cultures. Born to a Guatemalan mother and an American father, Carroll is able to occupy an important interstitial space within American society, which permits him to engage and understand the emotions, struggles, and expectations that emerge from those milieu. Having spent a significant amount of his career in Latin America where he taught and lectured extensively, he now combines his teaching at Denver Seminary and El Seminario Teológico Centroamericano in Guatemala.

Motivated by discussions of immigration that often tend to repeat "passionate ideological arguments, economic wrangling, or racial sentiments that dominate the national discourse" (19), Carroll believes that the diverse opinions Christians espouse on many issues, immigration included, have more to do with ideological commitments and personal backgrounds than with theological convictions. Thus, the text is devised as a primer for a biblically and theologically informed approach to the topic of immigration, presenting the core issues, defining terms, and making its argument readable and accessible to the specialist and non-specialist alike. Focusing primarily on Hispanic immigration, *Christians at the Border* proceeds in three steps. Chapter one offers an overall assessment of the situation and provides definitions of recurring terms. Chapters two through four address scriptural material from both Testaments. Chapter five makes a case for the application of this material to the dynamics of Hispanic immigration.

In his first chapter, Carroll surveys the history of immigration in the United States. Exploring the complex and often ambivalent nature of the relation between North American culture and new immigrants, he reminds readers that the immigration issue cannot be understood if removed from

its broader context. Presenting immigration as an international issue rather than a simple matter of securing American borders against the influx of people from the south, Carroll signals his intention to reframe the logic and rhetoric of the immigration debate. By choosing *undocumented immigrant* rather than *illegal alien* to describe newcomers, he thus resists the derogatory image of immigrants from Latin America as people "unchangeably foreign and other, without hope of reconciliation or mediation" (22). He briefly develops the rationale for this choice based on the concepts of nativism and the Push and Pull Theory. The former serves as a possible explanation for some of the negative reactions against immigrants in North America, the latter explains how the international economy may influence the movements of people around the globe. However, given the introductory nature of the book, the author rightly avoids extensive explorations of those theoretical concepts. This excellent summary of the history of Hispanic immigration in the United States also discusses several changes in immigration law—the establishment of criteria, such as quotas, and the recent discussions of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007.

With respect to the aforementioned problems of cultural identity and cultural assimilation or the lack thereof, the author presents a balanced discussion which takes into account the struggles and difficulties of the host culture and the immigrant community. I particularly valued the way in which he brings the concepts of cultural hybridity, multiple loyalties, and trans-nationalism into the debate. In our technological societies in which information and communication have changed the face of human interactions, making political and geographical boundaries have become more permeable, making these concepts extremely important in understanding the present phenomenon of international migration and immigration.

Chapters two through four explore scriptural traditions of hospitality in both the Old and New Testaments. Carroll makes it clear that neither testament directly addresses the issue of immigration as we understand it today. He claims that the Old Testament narratives of people's experiences as refugees and exiles and the New Testament tradition of offering hospitality to the stranger should inform and guide how Christians perceive and react to the immigrant issue today. Thus, Carroll argues, these principles

should be the starting points for a Christian discussion of immigration, rather than principles of legality or illegality. Specifically, a "more biblically grounded attitude" toward immigrants and immigration should lead Christians in the host country to adopt an attitude of "openness to the sojourners," which constitutes a virtue in the biblical tradition (112). Furthermore, a biblically informed attitude would help the immigrant community respond in a positive way to the openness of their brothers and sisters in the majority culture.

Turning then to the New Testament concept of hospitality as a Christian directive, Carroll addresses the problem with the traditional interpretation of Romans ch. 13, which he claims leads to the mistaken assumption that a nation's law and authority is inherently good. According to Carroll, this misconception causes some Christians in the majority culture to bring any conversation on immigration to a halt when the concept of legitimacy is narrowly applied to the situation of undocumented immigrants. At this point I wish Carroll had developed his argument, especially his discussion of the differences in Hispanics' and the majority culture Americans' conceptions of law and authority. Nevertheless, I respected his construal of Old Testament law as an ethical and paradigmatic ideal that may inform how Christians in the host culture and Hispanic Christians respond to the challenges of immigration.

Throughout the text, Carroll remains consistent to his initial thesis that Christians need to reconsider their starting point in the immigration debate. I recommend *Christians at the Border* as a coherent and informative introduction to the complex topic of Hispanic immigration.

LUIZ C. NASCIMENTO
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians. By Susan Eastman. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007, xiv + 206 pages.

Susan Eastman of Duke Divinity School has now published a revision and expansion of her 2003 Duke dissertation under the title *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians.* Although Eastman speaks to the interpretation of Galatians as a whole, the book actually comprises an exegetical study of Gal 4:12–5:1. The phrase "mother tongue" in the title, an allusion to Ursula Le Guin's 1986 Bryn Mawr College commencement address, refers not to Paul's native language (whether Greek or otherwise) but to "language not as mere communication but as relation, relationship . . . the language of emotions and of personal experience" (8). The phrase "language and theology" in the subtitle, then, alludes to Eastman's contention that Paul does theology in Galatians by making use of a particular mode of language, namely mother tongue. "Close attention to Paul's mode of proclamation will illuminate the contribution of this section of Galatians to the letter as a whole. In particular . . . Paul's enactment of the gospel and his maternal metaphors give motivational force to his message by communicating the staying power of the gospel" (182).

The book comprises seven chapters. The first of these, "The Torturer Became the Mother," serves as an introduction and includes a helpful discussion of methodology. The seventh and final chapter, "Paul's Mother Tongue and the Staying Power of the Gospel," synthesizes the conclusions of the work. The middle five chapters do the exegetical heavy lifting, and do so admirably. Chapter 2, "'Become Like Me!' Mimetic Transformations in Galatians 4:12-20," makes the case that Paul's plea to the Galatians ("Become as I am, for I also have become as you are" [NRSV here and elsewhere]) is genuinely reciprocal and not unidirectional, and is itself intended to effect the Galatians' perseverance. Chapter 3, "Paul among the Prophets," contains an argument for locating the rhetorical context for Paul's appeal not in any current Greek or Roman *topos* but in the classical prophets (especially Jeremiah), for whom personal life and prophetic vocation were of a piece. In ch. 4, "Galatians 4:19: A Labor of Divine Love," Eastman gives sustained attention to 4:19 ("My little children, for whom

I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you"). Interpreting "labor pains" as a reference to Paul's ongoing suffering in the preaching of the gospel, this verse is for Eastman an interpretive key to all of 4:12–5:1. Chapter 5, "Children of the Free Woman," takes up the second half of Eastman's pericope, the allegory of Hagar and Sarah (4:21–5:1), connecting its maternal imagery ("We are children of the free woman") not only to the image of Paul's own "labor pains" but also with the "barren woman" oracle of Isa 54:1 ("Sing, O barren one... for the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married"). In chapter 6, "Two 'Family Trees': The Opposition between the Flesh and the Spirit," Eastman looks beyond her own pericope to the discussion of flesh and spirit in 5:13–6:10, explaining how that passage, too, is subsumed under the guiding familial metaphor of the entire latter half of Galatians.

Paulinists familiar with Eastman's several recent articles in *JBL* and *JSNT* will find this book to be every bit as careful and creative as those shorter studies. Eastman's prose is technically impeccable and aesthetically beautiful; one surmises that her experience in the pulpit has made for a much more readable writing style than is the norm in academic biblical studies. Several eminent interpreters of Paul loom large in the book; in particular, the names of Beverly R. Gaventa, Richard B. Hays, and J. Louis Martyn figure prominently in both text and footnotes. While on the one hand this feature can sometimes give the impression of an in-house conversation among a small cadre of specialists, on the other hand it makes for a lively read for those who are familiar with recent developments in the study of Galatians and of Paul more generally, with Eastman parrying and thrusting her way through a friendly argument with her own teachers.

Though skillfully edited for publication, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue* remains a technical piece. It assumes knowledge of Greek on the reader's part, although all other ancient and modern languages are translated, and it includes some lengthy theoretical discussions of metaphor and mimesis, among other topics. While Eastman's conclusions will be of interest to anyone with a stake in Pauline interpretation (e.g., classicists, rabbinicists, historians, theologians), the book seems to be addressed especially to a Christian, and specifically an ecclesiastical, audience, insofar

as Eastman is concerned, "to allow the metaphors to speak in and to the context of human social constructs today" (192).

In keeping with this concern, Eastman speaks near the end of the book directly to a theme that has been implicit throughout: "Anyone familiar with Pauline studies will recognize an underlying polemic in the foregoing studies of Paul's 'mother tongue' . . . [a polemic against] the danger of reading and teaching Paul's letters as if they were only 'father tongue,' that is, unidirectional, objective, and authoritarian" (181). The great strength of Eastman's study is not that it raises this criticism of the dominant approach to Paul; others have done as much. Rather, the great strength of Eastman's study is that it offers a sustained, compelling reading of a key Pauline text on her alternative terms. That is, having made her methodological point, Eastman goes about demonstrating by example how her approach makes better sense of this text than have previous approaches.

As for the publishers' responsibilities, their decision in favor of footnotes rather than endnotes makes it easy to follow Eastman's lively dialogue with other interpreters of Galatians. The appended indices of subjects and ancient sources are as helpful as they are thorough; but in a technical monograph like this one, an index of modern authors, too, would have been a fitting addition. Eastman, for her part, is likely to find a place in indices of modern authors in many future studies of Galatians.

MATTHEW V. NOVENSON
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude. By Ben Witherington, III. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007, 656 pages.

In the second of his three volume *Letters and Homilies* series, Ben Witherington turns his attention to the Epistle to the Hebrews, James, and Jude. His decision to unite these three books in a commentary rests upon both their Jewish authorship and audience and also their character as oral

documents. His particular task is to comment on these New Testament books with focused attention on their rhetorical finesse and social setting.

To this end, the commentary is largely successful. In his straightforward yet engaging prose, Witherington continually highlights the various rhetorical tools utilized by these authors, thereby reminding modern readers how these texts might have sounded when they were read aloud to their intended audience(s) and how they might have worked to accomplish the authors' goals. His emphasis upon the prevalence of rhetoric during the time of the writing of the New Testament and the relationship between oratory and letter writing will not only serve to introduce the subject to interpreters unfamiliar with the canons of ancient rhetoric, but may also work to answer the objections of those wary of a rhetorical approach to scripture. In the same way, he draws from what can be known of the social situation to highlight the crises and culture that informed the writings of the author and the possible reactions of the readers.

The format of the commentary is particularly helpful. Each book has an extensive bibliography included, complete with a separate section of secondary works that employ a rhetorical method to treat these biblical texts. Interspersed in the commentary, where each verse or group of verses are in bold face type, are sidebars (titled "A Closer Look") that focus on an issue that sheds light on the text, be it examples of the various genres of rhetoric, charts of psalm quotations, theological issues (e.g., "God and the Son: The Question of Divine Identity," 104), or common concerns of interpreters of the church (e.g., "Exegetical Arm-Wrestling of Protestants over Hebrews 6:1-6," 215, or "Inspiration and Authority and the Citing of Noncanonical Texts," 612). These function as concise treatments of some of the most important or most queried issues in the letters. In his translations, Witherington offers what he terms a "literal and sometimes polyvalent" translation that allows the reader not only to see the various English options available but also to see "where the text is rough and harder to translate and where it is smooth as butter" (12). Finally, in the "Bridging the Horizons" section, Witherington lays out topics from the letters that would be useful for teaching and preaching, cautioning that those categories are not always easily interchangeable (371). For letters often perceived as opaque or ignored altogether, suggestions of how these can be made to

speak most effectively in the academy and in the church are welcome. For Hebrews, at least, Witherington provides a model of how this could be done by including a sermon of his own on Hebrews 12.

Some readers might be disappointed that his treatment of each letter from a socio-rhetorical approach yields few groundbreaking insights. He draws widely from other seasoned interpreters, and while that makes this volume an excellent compendium of recent scholarship, it causes this commentary to read much more like a reference work than a fresh interpretation. Nonetheless, his eye for rhetoric and the social situation, and, more often, his turn of phrase often lead to helpful insights into each letter.

In his treatment of Hebrews, Witherington addresses all the basic questions of introduction that plague interpreters. For example, he notes that the anonymity of the author could be due to the fact that this is a sermon and not a letter. He also comes down on certain sides of the issues (e.g., he asserts that Hebrews is pre-70 C.E. [27] and that Hebrews is written to "stave off defections of Jewish Christians" who thought it was easier to "just be Jews" [55]), a move which opens him to the criticisms of those who embrace the opposing viewpoint. Helpfully, he spends a great deal of space spelling out why Hebrews should be classified as epideictic rhetoric, since it was written to "motivate the audience to continue to remember and embrace their core values (involving both ideology and praxis) and avoid slipping into blameworthy beliefs and behaviors" (52). While interpreters may disagree with his classification, Witherington provides adequate descriptions of what the epideictic genre is and of the epideictic elements in Hebrews so the reader can make an informed decision. Finally, he maintains his commitment to view this letter primarily as a homily by dividing the sections of the letter by exposition and exhortation rather than by topic. He argues along with previous interpreters that the "expositional material serves the hortatory purpose of the whole work," not vice versa (43). While Witherington is careful to note the rhetorical skill of the author and his emphasis upon speaking, his argument would be strengthened had he noted the rhetorical force of the final speech that appears in ch. 13. There is more to be said than that this quotation "speaks directly to the audience's fears" (357). One could also add that, in an intentionally oral document in which God repeatedly addresses the audience

with the words of scripture, the fact that the audience gets to respond with scripture serves not only as a rhetorical high point but also emphasizes a theological point, namely that the audience has now entered into a dialogue with the God who speaks.

In his proportionally shorter treatments of the other letters, Witherington classifies James and Jude as examples of deliberative rhetoric, or "rhetoric to change some aspects of the audience's behavior in the near future" (393). Regarding James, he aptly notes that what makes it a difficult book is neither its textual history nor its Greek, but the very practical problem of "adhering to its advice" (387). In his discussion of Jude, he rightfully points out the extensive Hellenization of Galilee; and, hence, the possibility of Jude's familiarity with basic rhetorical tools.

A perfect volume for those who might want to teach or preach from—but not necessarily specialize in—one of these letters, this commentary serves as an excellent basic reference for these often less familiar and under appreciated New Testament sermons.

AMY L. B. PEELER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Following God Through Mark: Theological Tension in the Second Gospel. By Ira Brent Driggers. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007, x + 135 pages.

Ira Brent Driggers's work on the Gospel of Mark focuses on two major exegetical concerns of Markan scholars: the misunderstandings of the disciples and the activity of God in the narrative. This publication of his doctoral dissertation, completed at Princeton Theological Seminary in 2004, takes up both the call to describe what the New Testament says about God (Nils Dahl, 1975, "The Neglected Factor in NT Theology") and the works of his Doktorväter (Donald Juel and Brian Blount). The combination of these factors has produced an intriguing monograph on the interactions

between God and the disciples in the Second Gospel, which provokes as many questions as it offers answers.

Driggers establishes the foundation of his work in the hermeneutical conclusions of Robert Fowler and Stanley Fish and thus focuses on "reader-response criticism," or how the audience of Mark's Gospel dynamically interacts with the text to create meaning. This focus on the audience is helpful for Driggers. He describes the theological foundations and ramifications of "discipleship" throughout his work through the lens of those whom Mark calls "disciples," whether the Twelve or others. While these hermeneutical presuppositions are explained very briefly in Driggers's introduction, they have a profound effect on his exegesis as a whole. Indeed, these concerns about Mark's audience and their hearing of the Gospel combine with exegesis to move Driggers to his main conclusion: the God of Mark's Gospel works both invasively ("through Jesus") and transcendently ("apart from Jesus").

Driggers's title aptly describes what he does throughout his book: he follows God through Mark, particularly where Mark talks about the disciples. This means that he takes into account the whole text of the Gospel from 1:1–16:8, with various degrees of specificity. Such a breadth of exegesis provides a unique perspective; as Driggers sees it, God's relationship with Jesus and with the disciples strengthens and wanes in various places. Beginning with the prologue (ch. 1) and Jesus' calling of the fishermen (ch. 2), he describes the fishermen's response as both voluntary and compelled, as they are "fished" by God (2). Next, Driggers is perplexed and intrigued by the passages in Mark that show the disciples' incomprehension most clearly (cf. 4:13; 6:52; 8:17-18; ch. 3). He concludes, against much previous scholarship, that God is acting apart from Jesus (transcendently) and without Jesus' knowledge, to harden the disciples' hearts, just as God hardened Pharaoh's heart in Exodus (e.g., Ex 4:21; 7:23; 9:12). From these observations, the Gospel's audience can identify two sources for the disciples' misunderstanding: the disciples' own lack of comprehension of Jesus' ministry or mission and God's hardening of their hearts. Driggers describes the "growing rift between Jesus and the disciples" throughout the passion narrative (ch. 4), wherein Jesus' passion is a result of responses to God's invasive action through Jesus (which often equates to "human

agency"), and God's transcendent action, as foretold through Scripture (3, 62, 66-69, 77-83).

Driggers concludes that Mark's audience can find a tension expressed in the theology of the Gospel, attesting to these two ways God acts in the world (invasively and transcendently). The conflict, paradox, or tension that results is a way to "point ultimately to God's mystery" (83, 97-106). Driggers finds this to be true particularly at Mark's perplexing ending. He considers the women's silence to be complete (16:8), thus upholding Mark's contention that *all* disciples can fail. Yet, Driggers highlights the proclamation of the good news nonetheless: Jesus is risen. Thus, Mark's audience is exhorted to authentic discipleship (cf. 8:27–10:52), even though that discipleship is never a human possibility, but is possible only with God (cf. Mk 10:27; 14:36).

The conclusions of this work are thought-provoking for modern audiences of Mark. Driggers should be praised for his engagement with some of the most difficult texts in the Second Gospel, particularly since many interpreters try to avoid them. His conclusion that Mark teaches about the mystery of God is also a welcome corrective to biblical scholarship that sometimes neglects any word about God. Affirming the mystery of God in this mysterious Gospel is central to its theological interpretation.

At the same time, Driggers's hermeneutical presuppositions may have crippled his exegesis. In his introduction, he uses categories from narrative criticism (e.g., implied author and audience) while saying that he has not "excluded" historical questions (8). Instead, he wants to subordinate historical questions to narrative ones. Unfortunately, the downside of this decision is that theology discussed without any recourse to history can appear docetic. The discussion of the Gospel of Mark in which Driggers engages has no evident connections to anything outside the text itself. While foregrounding history at the expense of the text is inappropriate, neglecting historical concerns entirely is not the answer, because Mark is a historical document with a historical audience. It may be ironic, then, that much of Driggers's interpretation depends significantly on his limited reconstruction of Mark's audience. He defines them as "people already predisposed to believe 'the gospel of Jesus Christ' (1:1)" (9), but he diverges from this

presupposition when he claims that the hearers' knowledge comes only from what they have heard in the narrative (e.g., 41).

Historical questions could have been more easily addressed if Driggers had endeavored to cover fewer pericopes in the Gospel, but with more depth. The passages to which he gives the most attention (1:16-20; 4:10-12; 6:52; 8:14-21; 16:6-8) show an astute exegetical capability. Unfortunately, this skill is lost among the diversity of passages considered in the book. Overall, the monograph reads more like a too-short commentary than a development of a theme (or the characterization of an actor, God) through the Gospel. Furthermore, it appears that Driggers's interest in the disciples ultimately trumps his interest in the theology of the Gospel. This is most evident in his treatment of Mark 12. This chapter has the most references to God in the Gospel, and thus would likely have the most explicit "*theo*-logy" (4), but it is summarized with chapter 11 in four brief pages because it lacks many references to the disciples (70-74).

Moreover, Driggers's claims about Mark's theology do not appear to be stable categorizations throughout his work. When he begins, Driggers claims that God acts invasively (through Jesus) and transcendently (apart from Jesus), as we have seen. Nevertheless, by the time he interprets the passion narrative, these terms have become what seem like "glosses" for human agency and divine agency, respectively (cf. 62, 81, and 77 n51 and 81, where Driggers seems to recognize these discrepancies). Attempting to avoid this problem, Driggers describes God, who works invasively through Jesus, as working transcendently against Jesus. As a result, these inconsistencies in his terminology undermine the very claims that Driggers sets out to prove.

It is certainly important to explore how God acts in Mark's Gospel, particularly with respect to the disciples. Driggers has provided an analysis of this very issue. The questions of method, approach, and terminology that remain after reading this work show that there is much more to be done in order to illuminate how Mark's story of the "mystery of God" is indeed "the good news of Jesus Christ" (1:1).

LAURA C. SWEAT
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Acts for Everyone. By N. T. Wright. 2 vols. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008, 480 pages.

N. T. Wright is the Bishop of Durham, a leading New Testament scholar, and a prolific author. While his academic writings have contributed to the so-called Third Quest for the Historical Jesus and the New Perspective on Paul, he has also written very effectively for popular audiences (e.g., *Simply Christian,* 2006). In this second category is *Acts for Everyone,* Wright's latest issue in a series of guides (". . . *for Everyone*") to books of the New Testament. Like other issues in the series, *Acts for Everyone* is accessible to any reader, rich with anecdotes and study helps (maps, glossaries), and designed to foster spiritual formation.

Like a biblical commentary, *Acts for Everyone* discusses the text of Acts on a passage-by-passage basis. Wright addresses each passage in the same pattern: after an original translation of the text, he offers an analogy or personal anecdote, discusses the key issue(s) of the text, explains relevant historical information, and concludes by applying the message of the text to the lives of readers. For example, Wright's discussion of Acts 2:1-4 ("Here Comes the Power") begins with an analogy about Hoover vacuum cleaners, explains the historical significance of Pentecost, discusses the importance of speaking in tongues for early Christians, and concludes by addressing the relevance of spiritual experiences for modern Christians.

Wright's translations of Acts are original and readable, taking liberties to paraphrase for the sake of clarity. The introductory analogies or anecdotes range from a single paragraph to two or three pages. Explanations of historical issues vary depending on the needs of the passage. Avoiding scholarly debates surrounding each passage, Wright hones in on those facets of the text that he perceives to bear immediately upon the Christian life. For example, in discussing the close of Stephen's speech (Acts 7:35-53), Wright does not address the injury that might have resulted from such polemic between the earliest Christians and non-Christian Jews. Rather, he notes the force of Stephen's indictment and suggests that all of us, like Stephen's audience, ought to reevaluate how highly we esteem our own religious traditions (1:118-19). Similarly, in commenting on the decision of Paul (and Barnabas, Acts 13) to "turn" from Jews to Gentiles (Acts 13:46-

48; 18:6; 28:25b-28), Wright does not mention the intense debate among scholars in recent years over whether these words signal a close to Paul's mission to Jews. Instead, at these points he focuses on the ongoing spread of the gospel and its relevance for contemporary readers (2:22, 96, 246).

Bypassing hotbeds of scholarly interest may be wise, given the target audience of popular readers, but it may also sacrifice depth for the sake of simplicity. As a result, the reader benefits from the expertise of Wright, but is unaware of ongoing debates in the interpretation of Acts. For instance, in discussing the letter from Jerusalem about circumcision (Acts 15:22-35), Wright hardly refers to the complex historical questions that surround the text (e.g., In what sense is this letter historical?). Instead, he notes commonalities between the letter's message and Paul's ministry practices, and gives his own ideas why Paul never refers to this letter elsewhere. Wright concludes: "There are of course other ways of explaining this (for instance, as many think, that Luke's chronology is completely inside out and that the Council only took place much later, after most of Paul's letters had already been written). But the way I have approached it seems to me to make good sense historically, and in terms of what Paul, and Luke, actually wrote" (2:50-51). The book's approach to areas of exegetical debate may not satisfy every reader.

What *Acts for Everyone* does well is address the non-scholarly reader. Wright's prose, for instance, is extremely accessible. His anecdotes, moreover, are thoughtful, interesting, and relevant. He refers to ideas from contemporary literature (e.g., *The Madness of King George,* 1:1-2; *Watership Down,* 2:175-77), contemporary entertainment (e.g., a football game, 2:120), and personal experiences (e.g., lecture interruptions, 2:216-17) in ways that prompt fresh consideration of Acts. In short, for such an accomplished scholar to express exegetical truths in such plain language is quite a feat. Moreover, Wright builds in the reader a sense of excitement about reading Acts—a goal at which very few scholars truly aim. He notes that the earliest Christians knew an energy, excitement, and mystery associated with the Way, and emphasizes that the experiences of modern Christians should not be a stark contrast (1:viii). Given this, *Acts for Everyone* may not gratify readers with little interest in implementing evangelical mission

on a contemporary level. Nonetheless, Wright is to be praised for how he exhorts readers to engage the story of Acts in a holistic manner.

TROY M. TROFTGRUBEN
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Promise of Baptism: An Introduction to Baptism in Scripture and the Reformed Tradition. By James V. Brownson. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007, 223 pages.

Rarely are we fortunate enough to have a work that is both theologically astute and practically useful, but Brownson's volume on baptism is one of those rare works. Equally at home in the realms of biblical exegesis, church history, history of doctrine, theological reflection, and pastoral sensitivities, Brownson provides a readable, insightful, and extremely helpful book on the sacrament of baptism. While the title suggests that Brownson's discussion of baptism is limited to the Reformed tradition, he in fact moves easily outside of his tradition at times and takes up a variety of concerns that would be of interest, for example, to Baptists, Lutherans, and even Roman Catholics. Also thinking beyond the title, Brownson treats not only baptism but such issues as salvation, discipleship, and ecclesiology. Without a doubt, this volume should be on the shelf of every pastor and teacher in and for the church.

In terms of the book's layout, Brownson has organized the volume so that it can be easily used in an adult education class at a local church or referenced in a college or a seminary classroom setting. It consists of 6 main sections within which thirty short chapters are evenly spread. The sectional divisions cover the topics of "Basic Questions," "The Core Meanings of Baptism," "Baptism, Faith, and Salvation," "The Case for Infant Baptism," "Disputes and Questions Surrounding Infant Baptism," and "Pastoral Decisions Surrounding Baptism." Moreover, each chapter is structured in such a way that the basic issues and problems of a given aspect of baptism are first made clear, followed then by a biblical and theological response which seeks to clarify or resolve these issues and/or problems. Closing each chapter is a particularly welcomed summary section, a set of questions for consideration or discussion, and a brief bibliography

for further study. As Brownson claims, "This book will not answer all of [the questions], but will provide a 'road map' through some of the more common problems and questions [of baptism]" (xi).

This format should prove especially helpful for the pastor or teacher. Given the time crunch most pastors experience, Brownson's book makes it very manageable to offer a solid study on the topic of baptism in a relatively short amount of time. As for teachers, the book lends itself to the "big picture" of baptism and makes readily accessible the numerous concerns associated with it, such as biblical warrants, doctrinal debates, and so forth. Baptism is not always an easy doctrine to understand, but Brownson's book is easy to use and therefore makes the topic of baptism that much more accessible. As Brownson tells us, he wrote this book "out of a desire to be of service to the church" (xii).

Although written for the church at large, Brownson is nonetheless making a case, in the strongest way he knows how, for infant baptism as understood in the Reformed tradition. Spanning the distance of two sections and eight (albeit short) chapters, Brownson takes up the issues of "the case" for infant baptism and "disputes and questions" associated with infant baptism. As often occurs, the question of infant baptism tends to center around whether the "early church" baptized infants. Of course, there is not common agreement as to what extent the early church did so. As Brownson notes, "There is also reason to believe that the faith and practice of the early church may not have always been consistent or uniform with respect to baptism in general, and infant baptism in particular" (168). Brownson, rightly, then, turns his attention from the question of the practice of the early church in regard to infant baptism and to the question of what scriptural warrant there is for the practice and on what theological basis we ought to think about baptism, especially regarding infants. Along these lines, Brownson, also rightly in my estimation, notes well, "The core issue is not about baptizing infants; it concerns the basis on which baptism is done" (160). That is, the question is first and foremost about the theology of baptism and then the practice of baptism. When put this way, Brownson contends that the church and its members are not constituted in the first instance by "public confession," but by God's call (158). The church, in other words, is called into being by God and not brought together by free

association. Brownson writes, "The visible church, then (i.e., the flesh and blood fellowship into which we are baptized), is not defined in its essence by confession, but by God's calling. Nowhere in the New Testament is the church as a body addressed or defined as those who confess their faith" (157). Given this, baptism is first and foremost about God calling persons from sin to righteousness, judgment to grace, death to life.

Baptism, therefore, is that sign by which we identify what *God* has done and will continue to do for persons and is not dependent on what a person does, whether that person confesses Christ, changes her lifestyle, or takes up Christian practices. The issue, as Brownson sees it, is not primarily about baptism or the practice of baptism, but rather about what God is doing in regard to the salvation of persons as depicted in Scripture. Indeed, the church is comprised of individual members who have their salvation in Christ and as such are called to baptism, not as an act of confession but out of simple obedience to God's calling.

Perhaps an appropriate way to end this review is, in a manner following Brownson himself, with an eye to the future. Too often, Brownson laments, baptism, especially among "some North American Christians," is viewed as an end in itself and not the beginning of discipleship, as it should be. "In baptism," writes Brownson, "we are placed on the road of discipleship. Of course, the journey begins with that first step, and this should be celebrated heartily. Yet baptism is only the first step of what is usually a long journey" (209). And with this, I celebrate heartily Brownson's work on baptism, and I am confident that Brownson's work, like baptism itself, will greatly contribute to Christian discipleship well into the future.

TODD V. CIOFFI
WHITWORTH UNIVERSITY

Is Your Lord Large Enough? How C.S. Lewis Expands Our View of God. By Peter J. Schakel. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008, 208 pages.

The writings of C.S. Lewis extend across a vast imaginative landscape from Narnia to Perelandra, from the mythic past of Glome and Ungit to the contemporary stratagems of Screwtape. His numerous essays cover a wide range of topics, from apologetic accounts of Christianity for a skep-

tical world to theological reflections on Christian living for those within the Church. Any project, therefore, that seeks to present one of the many extraordinary facets of Lewis's work must limit its scope by employing a precise angle of analysis when sifting through this diverse and at times tangentially related collection of writings. The question raised by the title of Peter J. Schakel's latest book is initially as ambiguous as Lewis's writings are varied, requiring further clarification for the prospective reader. When Schakel claims that Lewis enlarges "*our* view of God," he is referring specifically to committed Christians, a focus which unavoidably leaves out other theological contributions Lewis's work may potentially make, such as the way *Mere Christianity* may challenge the agnostic to reevaluate her position or the way *The Abolition of Man* and *That Hideous Strength* may cause the Christian and non-Christian alike to reconsider the relationship between the ultimate aims of modern science and Christianity. Further, Schakel does not attempt to provide a rigorous theological analysis of Lewis's view of God but rather a highly accessible account of his spiritual themes which would benefit any committed Christian regardless of prior theological training.

Twelve chapters and four appendices comprise the structure of this volume with a series of endnotes organized according to page rather than citation number. Chapters are thematically arranged around topics such as time, prayer, grace, love, the Church, trust in God, suffering, doubt, death, and heaven. Each chapter opens with a quotation of scripture, introduces the theme to be explored in terms of its general importance to Lewis's thought, and then summarizes his view of the topic by referring to various statements found throughout his letters, essays, and novels. At the close of each chapter Schakel includes a small list of discussion questions which may prove useful in small group settings. Those new to Lewis may especially appreciate the concise and informative sketches of Lewis's biography and intellectual interests provided by appendices A and B. An inventory of Lewis's writings and a short list of helpful secondary literature may be found in appendices C and D.

A significant weakness of this volume relates to the author's treatment of Lewis's fiction. Schakel places Lewis's direct theological statements found in his essays and letters side by side with the metaphorical depic-

tions of spiritual truth taken from his novels. The result is jarring for the knowledgeable reader of Lewis who finds references to fictional scenes removed from their rich narrative contexts and straightforwardly explained by Schakel in a way that is non-Lewisian in manner and demythologizing in effect. One is reminded of Hyoi's words regarding poetry: " . . . the most splendid line becomes fully splendid only by means of all the lines after it; if you went back to it you would find it less splendid than you thought. You would kill it," (*Out of the Silent Planet*, 83). The narrative contexts of Lewis's stories provide the spiritual depth of his allusions to the Christian life which Schakel diminishes through decontextualization. Further, the explanatory restraint one finds in Lewis's fiction increases the force of his indirect references to Christianity. Often Schakel interprets where Lewis remains silent and directly explains where Lewis simply nudges the reader towards deeper reflection and self-discovery. For this reason, Schakel's manner of analysis is more suited to Lewis's essays and letters than to his stories.

Schakel nevertheless succeeds in offering an extremely readable account of certain significant Christian themes in Lewis's work. What Schakel lacks in theological depth and precision he makes up for in practical application, thereby providing a resource for those who desire an account of Lewis's views on various practical Christian themes without reading Lewis for themselves. The question of why anyone should read this book inevitably arises, however, when Lewis himself is one of the most readable, entertaining, spiritually profound, and practically relevant Christian writers of the modern era. I believe there are at least two types of readers who would especially benefit from this book. First, the young person who has enjoyed *The Chronicles of Narnia* but is not yet interested in Lewis's nonfiction may find here an extremely accessible account of his ideas about God and the Christian life. Second, the person who is new to Lewis and therefore uncertain of where to begin may use this volume as a helpful guide for determining which of Lewis's writings speak most directly to her own interests.

Lewis believes that our present life is the shadowed prelude to the vibrant fullness we will experience in eternity. His Platonic bent, not unrelated to 1 Cor 13:12, leads him to regard our future life with God as pos-

sessing an intensity of reality that will someday cause our earthly lives to appear diminished, muted, and veiled in comparison. Only then will we experience "the beginning of all things" through our inclusion in "the Great Dance" of which Ransom is told in *Perelandra* (244-246, 248). Similarly, most secondhand accounts of Lewis, whether this essay or Schakel's new book, inevitably present only a dim, shadowed reflection of the compelling radiance found in Lewis's work. Perhaps the greatest contribution Schakel's latest volume can make is to direct us to read C.S. Lewis for ourselves and to live in the hope of ever deepening and expanding encounters with the One of whom Lewis writes.

NATHAN D. HIEB
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil. By Christopher Southgate. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008, 196 pages.

One of the most significant theological challenges posed by the natural sciences is how to maintain belief in a good creator God in light of the long history of creaturely suffering that accompanies the evolution of all biological life. The many sciences inspired by Darwin's theory of natural selection unanimously assert that phenomena such as predation, extinction, and the overall struggle for survival are not only as old as life itself, they are also important and intrinsic aspects of the evolutionary process. As Tennyson famously phrased it, nature is "red in tooth and claw," which on the face of it seems to contradict the Christian understanding of an essentially good world created by a benevolent God. This is part of the problem of theodicy, although traditional theodical treatments tend to focus on human suffering. By contrast, Christopher Southgate's book, *The Groaning of Creation*, is an "evolutionary theodicy" focusing on the suffering of nonhuman creatures that accompanies the evolutionary narrative.

Southgate sees three interrelated aspects to the problem of evolutionary theodicy. First, there is the ontological problem of God granting existence to a world containing creaturely suffering. Second, there is the teleological problem of God having long-term purposes for the process of

divine creation, a process that includes predation, extinction, and gratuitous suffering. Third, there is the soteriological problem, which asks how the natural world fits into God's overall plan of redemption. Southgate addresses these challenges with what he calls a "compound evolutionary theodicy" that attempts to hold together the two assertions that creation is both "very good" (Gen 1:31) and yet "groaning in labor pains" (Rom 8:22). Before developing this proposal, however, Southgate first sweeps away a myriad of other approaches that he finds inadequate, including creationism, intelligent design, process theology, and the theological work of Teilhard de Chardin. He also rejects the explanation of creaturely corruption that depends on the narrative of a human "fall" from perfection while at the same time insisting that we must maintain the traditional, Christian view that God is in some sense a "determinate entity" that can be known through Jesus Christ raised from the dead.

After briefly surveying several attempts to address the problem of evolutionary theodicy by notable figures in the contemporary theology and science dialogue, many from whom he borrows heavily, Southgate dives into the heart of his own theological proposal. While he admits that this is the "most speculative" part of the book, it is also central to his theological vision and a rich contribution to systematic theology in its own right. Throughout he maintains three convictions: God as perfectly loving and good, God as Trinity, and creation as both the good work of the Triune God and yet ambiguously shot through with suffering. Southgate argues for a view of a suffering God engaged in "intraTrinitarian kenosis," where the self-emptying love of the Father begetting the Son establishes the possibility for creaturely existence in the power of the Spirit. Moreover, these same patterns establish the conditions for created "selves," which involve the biological self-assertion characteristic of the Darwinian perspective. It is this genetic relationship between self-giving kenosis and creaturely self-assertion that creates the ambiguity between goodness and groaning.

The process of "selving" can be most easily recognized in the freedom and capacity for self-transcendence found in human beings, but other creatures can become selves in ways appropriate to their kind. The problem of evolutionary theodicy, however, is that many individual creatures are prohibited from fulfilling their potential as selves, frustrated by gra-

tuitous suffering, predation, or extinction. Southgate argues that we must understand this as in some sense necessary for evolution's working toward more complex organisms and relational patterns, both of which facilitate the realization of self-transcendence and communal love that go beyond mere selving. This teleological vision is confirmed and extended by the work of Christ on the cross, where God's ultimate self-giving act "makes possible a self-transcendence in humans that evolution of itself would not make possible" (76). Southgate then concludes his work by exploring the eschatological dimensions and ethical implications of his proposal.

Southgate's book is an important contribution to the ongoing theodical discussion because it frames the problem in its broadest possible terms. A full treatment would need to address human suffering, but Southgate is right that this has already received an enormous amount of attention. Any potential solution to the problem of human suffering will only be convincing if it can be articulated within a cosmological framework that recognizes that suffering is apparently intrinsic to the development and ongoing balance of the natural world.

One of this book's greatest strengths is its thoroughness. Southgate clearly has a comprehensive grasp of the relevant (English language) material related to his topic, and his footnotes therefore read like a who's who in the contemporary disciplines of "religion and science," and interdisciplinary theology. This alone makes the book worthwhile, but Southgate's Trinitarian proposal—while not entirely novel—is also a creative and informed piece of constructive theology that deserves attention from Christian systematic theologians who have an interest in the sciences.

Another great strength of the book is its honesty. Southgate faces the full force of the problem of evolutionary theodicy without succumbing to the temptation of delivering simplistic answers. Some will disagree with his choices to reject this or that perspective; others will find his Trinitarian approach to be overly speculative or too narrowly Christian. However, Southgate should be commended for making his theological commitments transparent, and for those readers who share these commitments this book will undoubtedly prove to be provocative, if not compelling.

KENNETH A. REYNHOUT
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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